

PRAISE FOR THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

*If you are looking for wisdom from God to raise your children in the uniqueness of their personality, *The Parenting Handbook* is what you need to read! Focusing on the heart instead of outward behavior is the focus of this book, which is an approach that encourages lasting godly character. The short chapters, relevant stories and practical tools make this book a one of a kind and easy to read!*

*—Julie Kurz, Consultant For Family/Children’s Ministries,
Reconnect Ministries, Division of Church Assistance Ministry (CAM)*

“The Christian Parenting Handbook” represents the very best of Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller’s thinking. I love all of their work—and this latest book is no exception; it is simply masterful. The short chapters mean a busy parent can read for a few minutes and gain an insight. The book is solidly based upon Scripture, and in typical Turansky/Miller style, full of real-life illustrations that every parent can relate to. Their heart-based strategy is exactly what parents need to know to create a healthy environment in their home and raise great kids!

*—Larry Fowler, Executive Director of Global Networking,
Awana and KidzMatter*

“The Christian Parenting Handbook resonates deeply with my personal commitment to reach the hearts of children. It is a practical and positively brilliant resource for parents.”

—Flip Flippen, Chairman and NY Times best selling author

“Turansky and Miller are at the top of my list of authorities I would love sit down with and discuss biblical Christian parenting, to glean from their wisdom and experience. In this book, they just answered my first 20 questions here and 30 more I should ask.”

—John Tietsort, ThM, National Director, eChurchDepot

THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING COMPANION GUIDE

PUTTING 50 STRATEGIES INTO PRACTICE
TO STRENGTHEN YOUR FAMILY

DR. SCOTT TURANSKY

AND

JOANNE MILLER, RN, BSN

PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR BIBLICAL PARENTING

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The National Center for Biblical Parenting is a nonprofit corporation committed to the communication of sound, biblical parenting principles through teaching, counseling, and publishing written, audio, and video materials.

To obtain a complete resource list or have Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller present their material live, you may contact the National Center for Biblical Parenting 76 Hopatcong Drive, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648-4136 (609) 771-8002 or visit the website at: biblicalparenting.info

You may also want to take online parenting courses at Biblical Parenting University.
Learn more at biblicalparentinguniversity.com

You may email us at parent@biblicalparenting.org

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN are the founders of the National Center for Biblical Parenting. Their heart-based approach to parenting is revolutionizing families. Turansky and Miller are also the creators of Biblical Parenting University, providing parents with easy access to parent training through online courses.

Scott Turansky is a full time pastor of Calvary Chapel Living Hope in New Jersey. He and his wife Carrie have five adult children and three grandchildren.

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

EACH CHAPTER IN THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING COMPANION GUIDE FURTHER ELABORATES ON THE CORRESPONDING CHAPTER IN THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK. In addition you have a corresponding Audio Tip from Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN. Those tips may be downloaded and used by you because you purchased this book. You can download the files at this link: <http://www.biblicalparenting.org/parentingshifts/tcpcompanionguide-audios.asp>

We would suggest that you follow this plan as you move through the material.

1. Read the chapter in The Christian Parenting Handbook.
2. Listen to the audio from the Audio Tip.
3. Read the lesson in the Christian Parenting Companion Guide
4. Do the assignment in the Christian Parenting Companion Guide
5. Meditate on the scripture and use the suggested prayer to commit this area of parenting to the Lord.
6. Ask God to speak to you about specific ways to change yourself and your family.
7. Don't move to the next chapter too quickly. Taking one chapter a week or every few days may increase your ability to digest the material and allow God to work it into your life before moving forward.

May God richly bless you and your family as you allow him to touch you and work through you in your home.

INTRODUCTION

AFTER ONE OF OUR PARENTING SEMINARS, SHIRLEY, A MOM OF THREE KIDS SAT QUIETLY WHILE OTHERS SHUFFLED OUT. I (Scott) went over to her and asked if she was okay. She said, “This seminar was very helpful. It helped me see that I need to make some significant changes in me before I can work on my kids.”

I could see that God was doing something in her heart. I said, “It is true that when parents make changes, kids also learn to change, but I’d encourage you to make those changes with your kids, not necessarily before. Family life is a workshop where God grows children and their parents in his grace.”

It’s because of our commitment to help parents grow too, that we created this Companion Guide to accompany *The Christian Parenting Handbook*. We know that many parents will use *The Christian Parenting Handbook* as a practical tool to change the way they parent in order to use more of a heart-based approach.

But many parents want more. They want specific ways that they can change themselves in order to be more effective in their family. *The Christian Parenting Companion Guide* does just that. It takes each of the 50 chapters in *The Christian Parenting Handbook* and identifies 50 principles that focus on the parent.

The reality is that God wants to give his grace freely to every person, but only some receive it. We must position ourselves under the spigot of God’s grace in order to receive it. That process starts with salvation. God says in Ephesians 2:8-9 that “we are saved by grace,” but it doesn’t stop there. It says that the grace is received “through faith.” That means that only those people who put their faith in Jesus actually receive the grace of his salvation.

Grace is freely given but only some receive it. James 4:6 says that God gives grace to the humble. Those who are willing to admit they have a problem and come to God for help are the ones who receive the benefits that God provides. There are practical things that you can do that open your heart to the grace of God for your parenting. Sometimes it means making a commitment to reduce

anger, change your speech patterns, or pray for your kids more. Each step of obedience increases your ability to receive God's grace in practical ways.

The goal of parenting isn't to get kids to look clean and nice. The goal is for every member of a family to grow more to be like Jesus. Helping children do that requires many tools including things such as prayer, firmness, dialogue, care, teaching, training, correction, limit setting, and the list goes on and on.

But anyone who has kids knows that the parenting process is a sanctifying experience. Each Christian parent is drawn to the reality that a family's success requires total dependence on God. That invariably means growth and change in parents as well as children.

More and more parents are looking for solutions that not only help them know what to do to strengthen their families, but also what it means to be a good parent. The reality is the parenting is the toughest job in the world. Parents need all the help they can get. We trust that this Christian Parenting Companion Guide will make the process a little bit easier.

1

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Consistency can teach kids to appear good, clean, and nice, but to help them change their hearts, other parenting skills must be added to the picture. Because you believe that God has created your child with a heart, you have access to an additional barrel of parenting strategies.

CONSISTENCY IS OVERRATED

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Identify tendencies your child needs to change, and develop strategies instead of reacting to each misbehavior.

YOU CAN TELL WHAT AREAS OF THE HEART YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO WORK ON BY TAKING NOTE OF THE TENDENCIES YOUR CHILD HAS IN GIVEN SITUATIONS. For example, your child might argue whenever given a no answer, continually pick on his little brother, or lie to get out of trouble. Patterns of wrong behavior are indicators of something deeper going on in the heart.

A heart-based approach to parenting often requires that you first study your child. You're trying to recognize tendencies and then choose a wise response to address them. This is a more effective approach than trying to be consistent when you see individual wrong behaviors. Instead, identify the tendency and look for a way to help your child move beyond that temptation to a stronger heart.



ASSIGNMENT

Jot down one tendency you see in your child that needs to change and then plan a way to share what you see in a private, positive meeting with your child. You might say, "Son, I see that you're doing well in several areas of your life. For example, you're doing pretty well in school. I like the way you're caring for the dog without being reminded, and you're

doing better at getting yourself up in the morning. But I've noticed one thing that might hinder your success and I wanted to share that with you so that you can do better in life. I've noticed that you tend to pick on your brother and boast when you do something better than him. Here's why I think that's a problem... And here's my suggestion to help you do better.... I'm going to be watching to see how you do and I'm going to point it out when I see it. This is going to help you a lot. I'm excited to see you grow and develop in your heart.



A STEP FORWARD

One of the keys to a heart-based approach to parenting is more dialogue and coaching children forward. Of course, some kids also need consequences, but at least you can try to set things moving in the right direction. If you adjust your parenting to focus on tendencies children have, you'll be far more effective as you work with your child and not as distracted by individual misbehaviors or the need to be consistent.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Dear Father, I want to ask you for discernment to see past the behavior patterns my child has to the heart. Give me insight so that I might know best how to help my child change from the inside out. I pray that you would give me a heart that has a tendency to rely on you in times of stress. Please give me your strength as I parent my child. Amen.

**Above all
else, guard your
heart, for it is the
wellspring of life.**

— *Proverbs 4:23*

2

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

A continual reliance on external motivators takes advantage of a child's selfishness and exchanges a little gratification for a desired behavior. Children raised on heavy doses of external motivation develop attitudes of entitlement, asking, "What's in it for me?"

BUILD INTERNAL MOTIVATION

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Deemphasize rewards and punishment so that kids won't ask, "What's in it for me?" but instead will ask, "What's the right thing to do?"

DESIRES EXIST IN THE HEART OF A CHILD. Some of those desires such as to play, be entertained, or be in control sometimes cause children to do what they feel like doing instead of doing what's right. Some parents then make the mistake of using rewards to get children to want to do the desired action. Although giving rewards isn't wrong, it can develop negative thinking patterns in children.

Behavior modification appeals to the selfishness inside a child's heart. The goal instead, is to build a sense of internal obligation. That's a sign of maturity and children of any age can start developing it. A sense of obligation helps children make decisions based on what they know they should do instead of what they feel like doing. When children learn to do what's right because it's the right thing to do instead of just getting a bigger reward, then maturity begins to develop in the heart.



ASSIGNMENT

Take a look at the words you use when you try to motivate your child to do something. If you find yourself continually holding out a benefit for accomplishing a current task, then

maybe you'll want to make some adjustments. Some parents don't even realize how easily they say things such as, "Clean up the mess and I'll give you a snack," or "Finish your homework and you can..." Talking about benefits that come from work isn't wrong, but some parents overuse the benefits and motivate kids with them continually.

Rather, it might be better to say, "You need to clean up your room. Let's break the task into smaller pieces. Pick up the clothes and report back to me that you've done that one part. Then we'll go to the next step, and so on." Children may need consequences and rewards at times. But the primary goal must be to build character and internal motivation in order for children to develop a sense of obligation instead of entitlement.



A STEP FORWARD

The next time you give an assignment and you see your child resisting or having a bad attitude, instead of resorting to some form of reward or punishment, it might be better to call the child into the other room and have a discussion. "One of the signs of maturity is that you're able to do a task without a parent watching over you. We need to develop a plan for that to happen in this situation. Tell me what you're going to do to get this job done. I don't want to resort to bribes or threats. Let's get it done." Most children need some work to move from external to internal motivation, but more dialogue, challenges, and smaller practice assignments can go a long way to help kids make internal changes.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, you know the heart of my child. I'm trying to build internal motivation so that my child will make right choices even when it's hard. I know that's what you want. I pray that you would give me greater wisdom to know how to guide my child to right thinking and a better heart response to life situations. Please use me and my interactions to guide my child forward in some ways that build strong character. Amen.

**It teaches
us to say "No" to
ungodliness and
worldly passions, and
to live self-controlled,
upright and godly
lives in this
present age.**

- Titus 2:12

3

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Many parents move to consequences too quickly. They see a child doing the wrong thing and they yell, "If you don't stop that, I'll..." and off they go into consequences to motivate change. Keep in mind that there is a finite number of consequences available to you as you train your child. If you overuse them, they wear out.

CONSEQUENCES AREN'T THE ONLY ANSWER

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Don't overuse consequences. Rather, use a multi-faceted approach to change the heart.

MANY PARENTS ARE LOOKING FOR NEW OR BIGGER CONSEQUENCES BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE THAT SOMEHOW IT'S THE CONSEQUENCES THAT CHANGE THE CHILD. And, if you're relying on behavior modification to change behavior, that might work temporarily. But God made kids different than animals and that means parents have a much larger barrel of tools to help bring about change.

Lasting change takes time. Dialogue, teaching, and prayer can often bring about more significant change than a consequence can. Practicing doing the right thing is just one alternative to consequences that can help children develop new tendencies.



ASSIGNMENT

Study your child and determine an area of weakness that would benefit from some practice to do what's right. Instead of taking away a privilege to motivate change it might be better to set up some practice sessions for doing the right thing. If a child has a problem following instructions for example, then it might be helpful to determine a better plan

and practice it ten times a day for a few days to develop a new pattern. Or if, for example, a child has a bad attitude in the morning about taking his pajamas out of the bathroom, you might simply express disapproval at the moment and then later in the day when you have more time, talk about it and say, “I’ve noticed that you have a bad attitude sometimes when I give you a task like I did this morning. So, we’re going to practice following instructions a few times this afternoon and then tomorrow morning when I give you an instruction we’ll use your response to gauge whether we need to do some more practice tomorrow afternoon as well.



A STEP FORWARD

Practicing to do the right thing adds a positive dimension to the parenting interaction. Now, instead of focusing on what the child did wrong, you’re concentrating on what the child can do better.

A coaching attitude of the parent instead of a police officer approach can go a long way to influence change as well. It’s been said that change takes place in children at the speed of relationship. By increasing that relationship in the correction process, kids often change more effectively.



SOMETHING I’VE LEARNED OR I’M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I'm grateful for your mercy and grace. The mercy frees me up from consequences I should be receiving and the grace gives me the energy and strength to carry on to do what's right. Please help me as I work with my child to share a similar approach. I want to serve you in my parenting and to reflect your character as I move forward. Thank you for being my heavenly Father. Amen.

**Brothers
and sisters,
if someone is
caught in a sin,
you who live by
the Spirit should
restore that person
gently. But watch
yourselves, or you
also may be
tempted.**

—Galatians
6:1

4

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Grouping offenses around character qualities is freeing for many parents. First, it provides some perspective. Instead of working on fifty different negative behaviors, now you can focus on three or four positive character qualities. Furthermore, once you develop a strategy for character development, you begin to see many of the offenses in your child's life as opportunities for growth.

IDENTIFY CHARACTER QUALITIES TO ADDRESS PROBLEMS

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Identify one or two character qualities you're working on with your child in order to strategically focus your parenting energy.

THE PERSPECTIVE GAINED FROM THIS EXERCISE IS EMPOWERING FOR PARENTS. When you spend time thinking about what your child needs to work on instead of what your child is doing wrong, then your whole focus changes on a day-to-day basis. Now you're looking for solutions, not just being irritated by problems.

Furthermore, children need help knowing how to develop character. A character quality is simply a group of behaviors and thinking patterns. The person with self-control acts and thinks differently than the person without it.

The same is true of the person who is generous or who is thorough. They approach life differently. If you're going to build character in kids then you'll want to think about how you want them to think and act, not just what you want them to stop doing. That shift in parental thinking is important for maximizing growth.



ASSIGNMENT

Do the assignment suggested in The Christian Parenting Handbook. Make a list of negative behaviors you see in your child. Then identify

the positive quality needed. Brainstorm about ways to think and act to develop that quality and then look for creative ways to present and teach that quality to your child. It's interesting how a positive approach like this can often provide greater motivation to the parent and the child. Kids see what they are trying to develop and parents are more focused.



A STEP FORWARD

There are too many parenting tasks in a day to think that challenging every misbehavior is reasonable. When parents take a little time to study a child and develop a strategy to move forward, it can make the training process much easier and certainly more effective. Furthermore, kids view their parents differently seeing that they're trying to help instead of simply criticizing them.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Father, thank you for your empowering for my heart. I need your strength and encouragement. In fact, I need all of those nine things that are part of the fruit of the Spirit you offer. Each one of those are character qualities I desire as a parent. Please empower me with your Spirit and give me the supernatural ability to demonstrate those qualities in my life. Lord, I also ask for wisdom as I try to help my children grow in these areas as well. Amen.

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

*—Galatians
5:22-23*

5

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

If you find yourself nagging your child for the same thing over and over again, or yelling out of sheer exasperation because the same problem continually surfaces, it's definitely time for a different plan. One of the best ways to promote change is to transfer responsibility for that change to the child.

TRANSFER RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHANGE TO THE CHILD

PARENTING PRINCIPLE _____

Look for ways to transfer responsibility for change to the child.

TOO OFTEN PARENTS HOLD ONTO THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHANGING A CHILD. Although parental guidance is needed it's important for children to own the change as well. It's not optional. Parents can do several things to help kids think differently and act differently. It begins with the child taking ownership of the problem. This requires that they ask different questions of themselves. In fact, when they own the problem, then they can own the solution as well.

For example, when giving an instruction to a child, the child must report back. The responsibility for completing the task has now transferred to the child. When teaching children to take initiative, require a child to think of some way to add to family life but don't specify what that is. The child must take responsibility for determining what to do. When sending a child to a Break to settle down, don't set a timer but tell the child to come back after settling down, thus transferring responsibility to the child. When a child meets with a parent after an offense the parent can ask the question, "What did you do wrong?" thus requiring the child to take responsibility for the offense.

ASSIGNMENT

Identify an area where you'd like your child to take initiative or to assume some kind of responsibility. Then look for ways to transfer the responsibility to your child. That doesn't mean that you walk away. It simply means that you parent differently. Whatever you choose to do, make sure that your child is left with



the responsibility to take some form of action instead of waiting for you to keep things moving.

For example, if you want your child to remember to feed the cat each morning you might ask the child to set up a reminder system to manage it. You might suggest a note, alarm, or other reminder technique, but your child must choose which one to use and then use it. You then, as a parent, change your role to coach. Instead of saying, “Remember to feed the cat,” you’re now saying things like, “How’s your reminder system doing?” You’re drawing attention to the child’s system in-

stead of allowing the child to rely on parental promptings to get things done.



A STEP FORWARD

Children feel a sense of respect when parents transfer responsibility to them. It’s as if parents are saying, “I believe in you. I know that you have what it takes to be successful here. I’m going to coach you but you’re in charge of making this happen.” When parents move to that kind of thinking, kids rise to the occasion. That doesn’t mean that parents move away. It simply means that parents act differently in order to increase the child’s internal motivation.



SOMETHING I’VE LEARNED OR I’M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I want to help my child be more internally motivated. I want to look for ways to build the heart. Thank you for your desire for my own heart. Would you please continue to work on my heart. I know that sometimes I need your strength to be internally motivated myself. I want to serve you with all of my heart. I want the same for my child. Please help me model what that looks like in practical terms each day.

**Love the
Lord your God
with all your heart
and with all your
soul and with all
your strength and
with all your mind.**

—Luke 10:27

6

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Children need firmness, direction, limit setting, instruction, and correction. But don't forget, they also need a lot of love, teaching, grace, affirmation, appreciation, and relationship. Of course, you know that, but it's good to be reminded every once in a while, especially when the business of family life gets intense.

THE RELATIONAL SIDE OF PARENTING

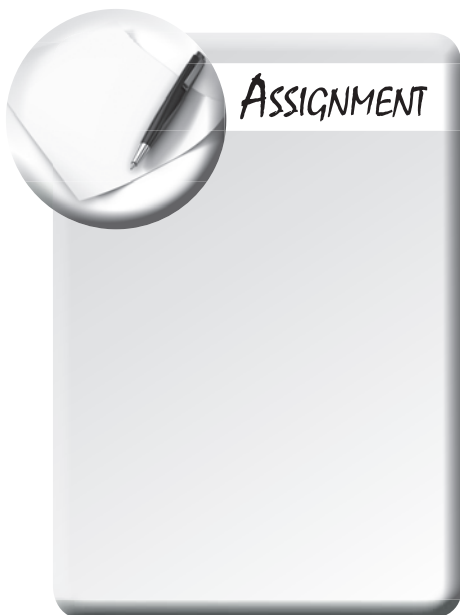
PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Think relationship first as you're trying to solve problems with children or keep the business of family life going forward.

CHILDREN CHANGE IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO THE STRENGTH OF THE RELATIONSHIP. That's a great statement to ponder. Kids need direction, but they also need support. Sometimes parents become preoccupied with the change that needs to take place or the work that must be completed. When we pull back and look at the situation a bit, we then realize how important relationship is.

This isn't one of those truths that's new. It's something we all need reminders about. We all know that love is important, but we get distracted at times from what's most important. Relationship builds bonds that promote cooperation and responsiveness in kids. Close connections and positive feelings between parents and children help children stay on track and value the family. Sometimes the most effective way to correct or redirect is through relationship. Having a conversation about values for example, may be more effective at changing the heart than just saying no or giving a consequence. Winning a child's heart through relationship allows everyone to move forward together.

So use this lesson as a reminder to stop for a moment and ask yourself some important questions about your relationship with your child. Are there some new or different ways that you might strengthen relationship with each of your children? Or maybe it's simply going back to some of the things that you already know work. Kids need to feel love and acceptance from Mom and Dad and keeping that fire burning is strategic for closeness.



ASSIGNMENT

Take a few moments and write down the way that your child likes to be loved. What things are important? What strategies work best? How does your child best receive love? It may be wise to ask your child to guide your thinking with questions such as, “What do I do that makes you feel loved?” Or, “How do you like to be loved?” It’s interesting to listen to kids and hear what means the most to them.

Some kids seem to be rather prickly when it comes to relationship. They’re hard to love because they’re annoying, irritating, or rub others the wrong way. Love isn’t always easy,

but it is always important. The work you do to overcome barriers can go a long way to show that you care and strengthen your relationship.



A STEP FORWARD

Remember to pause now and then to gauge the strength of relationships in your family. Often disobedience and struggles are warning signs that it’s time to work on relationship again. Family values are passed on through relationship so don’t lose sight of its importance.



SOMETHING I’VE LEARNED OR I’M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, there's nothing like raising kids to help me understand more about your Father-like qualities. I want to take a moment and just thank you for your love and faithfulness to me. Thank you for desiring relationship with me. You love me just the way I need to be loved and your care for me is a valuable gift. I'm grateful for what you've done for me and continue to do every day.

**Look at
the birds of the
air; they do not
sow or reap or store
away in barns, and
yet your heavenly
Father feeds them.
Are you not much
more valuable
than they?**

*—Matthew
6:26*

7

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Envisioning a positive future gives your children hope and direction. It says, "You're going to make it. I believe in you." It's a way to honor your kids. When you help your children see a positive future, you're giving them a gift that will last a lifetime, a helpful way of looking at themselves and their lives.

ENVISION A POSITIVE FUTURE

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Frame life for your child in ways that provide hope and a positive outlook on the future.

ONE OF THE GREATEST BENEFITS OF BEING A CHILD OF GOD IS THE POSITIVE OUTLOOK GOD PROVIDES FOR LIFE. In the midst of the grind of the daily experience, some people get discouraged or feel hopeless. Instead, they need to feel hopeful, not because of some kind of hyped up positive attitude about life, but because of genuine understanding of God's character and plan for this world. Children may not be able to understand all of the theology that underpins your attitude about life, but they'll see the result in you as you share perspective with them.

The current work going on in the hardships of life is training material for the future. God is building character now through homework struggles, relational challenges, or simply trying to overcome selfishness. Your words about how the present struggle can produce future benefit help children gain a wholesome attitude about the present and the future.

Kids tend to think in the present. Your reminders equip children to see life in a much more hopeful way.

ASSIGNMENT

Study your child in two ways. First, jot down some of the positive qualities that contribute to a unique personality. Think about how those things might demonstrate themselves in adult life. Share those observations with your child and anticipate an attractive future because of those dimensions of your child's personality and character.



Next, look at some of the qualities your child is working on such as developing respect, learning how to work hard, or responding well to authority. Talk about how beneficial those qualities are for the future of any one, but particularly in your child's future given the uniqueness you've already imagined.

Children find encouragement when they know that there is some meaning to the difficulties they're experiencing. You're the best person to deliver that positive message to your children.



A STEP FORWARD

Perspective is hard for kids who live in the present. They need regular reminders that their current challenges have great potential for the future. Responses today to the struggles of life produce patterns of thinking and acting that can enhance a person's ability to face tomorrow with greater confidence, not just in self, but in God who is working in us for the future.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, sometimes I have challenges in my own thinking about my child's future. Please give me the faith to trust you and allow you to do the work in my child and through me to bring about your end. Help me to demonstrate faith to my child by having a positive outlook on the future, excited to see what you're going to do in my life and also in the life of my child. Thank you for the privilege of trusting you. Amen.

“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

*—Philippians
1:6*

8

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

The heart is where we wrestle with things. When experience, teaching, and values need to be integrated into life, it happens in the workshop of the heart. Information comes into our heads on a regular basis, but much of it just stays there. Only when it moves down to our hearts does it become part of our lives.

LOOK FOR HEART MOMENTS

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Look for heart moments in the lives of your children, and when you can't find them, create them.

WHEN NEW TRUTHS GET INTO THE HEART OF A CHILD, CHANGE TAKES PLACE. Kids integrate life experience into values and convictions, actually changing who they are. Simply telling a child to be kind to his sister rarely produces the desired result. Kids must wrestle with their own selfishness and find practical ways to move from meanness to kindness before it will come naturally to them.

Sometimes parents work on behavior change. That's not bad. Behavior is important. It's what you see. But the goal isn't to simply get kids to look good, clean, and nice. The goal is to help them integrate the things they're learning into their hearts to help them to be different people.

God is the one who ultimately changes the heart, but he often uses parents and life experience to mold a child's beliefs, values, and inner passion. Heart moments don't come along too often with some children so it's important to be available and ready to capitalize on them when they do.



ASSIGNMENT

Plan a heart moment. This can be tricky because it means that several things must come together at the same time. The right timing,

an appropriate message, and God's grace all must intersect with a child's heart, and all of that takes place on the move.

To plan a heart moment, first determine an idea, principle, or message you'd like to communicate. Then pray and ask God for wisdom to know what method might be best. A thoughtful comment may be helpful, but many children learn best through experience, so be open to a different approach than you might be used to.

Once you have the idea and the communication method, pray and ask God for the timing. Maybe it means that you schedule something or more often it might mean that you're ready and waiting for an opportunity. Having the eyes ready to see a potential situation may be the hardest part. But when God presents the right time, you'll be ready with the appropriate action.

Try it. Did it work? If not, why not? Can you learn some things for next time. If it did, thank the Lord for his grace in that situation.



A STEP FORWARD

Heart moments are missed for a number of reasons. Sometimes we can't see them when they show up. Other times, we're not ready when the opportunity presents itself. A heart of prayer is often the key. If you regularly pray for your child and ask God to work, he will often show you just the right time to be quiet or act in order to be a significant influence on the heart.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I ask right now that you would give me a spiritual sensitivity to what you're doing in my child's life. Help me to see exactly what you want me to do and how you want me to respond. I want to be ready to act when you say. Please give me a sensitivity to your heart and to my child's as well and allow me to be that conduit between the two. Amen.

**The LORD
does not look at
the things man
looks at. Man looks
at the outward
appearance, but the
LORD looks at the
heart.**

*—1 Samuel
16:7*

9

Often the signs of a need for a parenting shift are increased friction and frustration in family dynamics. If family life isn't working, a number of causes may need attention. Most of the time it means that parents will have to change the way they work with their kids. The old methods of relating don't work the same way anymore.

MAKE PARENTING SHIFTS

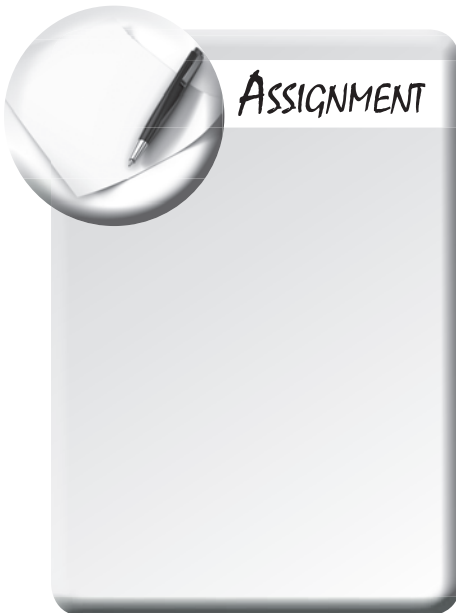
PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Be ready to adjust your parenting approach to match the changing needs of the child.

PARENTING IS A MOVING TARGET, AND CONTINUALLY REQUIRES THAT PARENTS MAKE ADJUSTMENTS IN ORDER TO BE EFFECTIVE. Just because a strategy worked with one child, or worked in the past with this child, doesn't mean it's the best one for now. Parenting always requires shifts in thinking and acting in order to maximize impact.

That doesn't mean that your values change. You still hold on to God's Word, relationship, and the importance of family. But it means that your methodology will change. In the past you may have just given a quick instruction and required

an immediate response. Now, you may need to have a bit more interaction in order to help your child process the instruction in a way that's most productive. Correction times or limit setting all take on new dimensions as children get older. You'll add new parenting strategies based on your child's needs or weaknesses. That's all part of what it means to be a parent.



ASSIGNMENT

Let's examine your parenting style in just one area. Are you more relational or more rules-oriented in your approach to parenting?

Neither is wrong. There are a lot of good ways to raise children. One isn't necessarily better than the other. However, if you start to see some negative results you might want to make a parenting shift. For example, if you're more relational in your parenting approach and you see more arguing, resistance, or lack of respect, you may want to keep strong relational methods but also make a shift to add more firmness for your child's benefit.

If on the other hand, you tend to be more rules-oriented and you see resentment, dishonesty, or defiance, you may want to add some relational tools to counter the negative tendencies you're experiencing. These kinds of shifts are normal and a healthy part of parental growth.



A STEP FORWARD

Your flexibility and sensitivity are important for good parenting. Some children need one approach while others need something very different. Sometimes what children need is for parents to move out of their own comfort zone and do things differently.

That's what makes parenting such a spiritual experience. God leads us to continual growth and parenting is one of those tools that he uses to reveal areas where we must change.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, please help me to know how best to love and care for my child. This parenting thing is very complicated. I need your wisdom and grace to make it through each day. I want to be so connected to your heart, Lord, that you can direct me and lead me in ways that might be outside of my comfort zone. Give me insight into my child's needs. I ask that you would lead and guide me forward. Amen.

**And we
urge you,
brothers, warn
those who are idle,
encourage the timid,
help the weak, be
patient with
everyone.**

*—1 Thessalonians
5:14*

10

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

When you stop to think about it, the problems children face now are the same ones they'll face when they get older. For example, a lot of adults whine, complain, and have bad attitudes, and can't follow a simple instruction without an argument. So why not develop adult solutions for children's problems now, break them down to their developmental level, and practice right responses?

PARENTING IS AN INVESTMENT— THINK LONG TERM

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Avoid reactive parenting and instead develop a plan involving long-term solutions to children's problems.

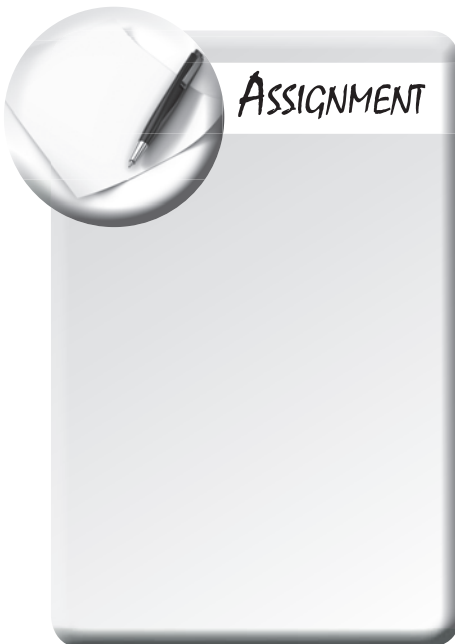
IT'S AMAZING WHAT A LITTLE PERSPECTIVE DOES TO THE PARENTING PROCESS. Sometimes parents get bogged down in the here and now, just trying to get through the day, and stepping back for a bit can be helpful. One mom said, "It's easy for me to feel overwhelmed with all of the things I'd like to do in a day. When I get too focused on food choices, chores, teaching, relationships, and getting kids to cooperate, I become someone I don't like. I get so intense about life that it drives

my family crazy. Sometimes I have to pull back and evaluate what's most important. When I keep my focus on the most important things then life goes better in our home."

The same is true as you try to work with individual challenges your children have. When you step back and see the long-term goals you have for your kids, then you can translate them into the daily tasks more easily. The current solutions for problems you're experiencing need to fit into an overall plan that you desire for your child.

ASSIGNMENT

Take one problem you're experiencing in one



of your children. Ask yourself the question, "What is the adult solution to this kind of problem?" Now, take that adult solution and look for developmentally appropriate ways your child can implement it. Look for ways to communicate those solutions to children that make sense to them.



A STEP FORWARD

When you present solutions to kids you might say, "I have an idea that's going to help you be more successful." Presenting a solution for a child's anger, relational challenges, or personal development is best done in a hopeful way. That doesn't mean abandoning firmness, but the presentation of the solution often determines how it is received by the child.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I thank you that you have a long-term view of my growth. I'm grateful for your patience, mercy, and grace in my life. Please help me as I look for solutions for our family. I need your help and insight to see past the current challenges to find the best ideas and strategies for the long-term. Please give me wisdom to see past the present to the future. Amen

**And God is
able to make all
grace abound to
you, so that in all
things at all times,
having all that you
need, you will
abound in every
good work.**

*—2 Corinthians
9:8*

11

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Independence teaches children important qualities, such as problem solving, confidence, and responsibility; it must be balanced with the ability to work on a team. Teamwork requires communication, compromise, and cooperation, essential qualities kids need for life. Children need to know what makes them special and unique, but they also benefit from seeing how a team approach to life's challenges produces great results.

TEAMWORK . . . INDIVIDUALS AT THEIR BEST

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Teach children to work as a team and make teamwork a priority as part of your family's identity.

MUCH OF SOCIETY EMPHASIZES INDIVIDUALITY AND THE UNIQUENESS OF THE INDIVIDUAL. Children are encouraged to explore their interests, develop their skills, and discover their abilities. Although that is good, sometimes families go overboard and lose any sense of family identity. At the same time that parents emphasize uniqueness, it's also important to build a sense of family unity.

There are several practical ways to build unity in the family. Eating as a family, working on projects together, attending events, even kids' events, as a family all contribute to a sense of oneness. But sometimes unity happens through firmness, not allowing putdowns and requiring affirmation in a home. As you look for ways to build internal unity you'll also want to choose the words you use to describe your family. "We're the Smith family. We work hard and we have fun together." That's a positive way to help children believe that your family has a united purpose.



ASSIGNMENT

Call a family meeting. Avoid discipline or critiques throughout this whole meeting. Instead,

make the meeting all about planning something together. Ideally, you might plan to serve together and then celebrate. You might create encouragement notes and take them to someone who is sick and then go out for ice cream, or you might rake leaves in the front yard followed by an outing that all would enjoy. Let family members suggest their ideas to gain ownership from others. As you make unity and teamwork a priority, you'll begin to change the culture of family life.



A STEP FORWARD

Your words are strategic. Be sure to affirm the unity you're already seeing in your home. Emphasize common ground. You might even consider writing down several positive things you can say on a regular basis to foster a sense of unity among family members.

Talk about how individual differences complement each other to make the team stronger. Kids listen to what you say, so make your words count.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for providing a common ground that we share in you. I know that we can find common interests among the members of our family, but most of all I want our family to be united in you. So, please draw us together as a family to serve and honor you in everything that we do. Amen.

**Be
completely
humble and
gentle; be patient,
bearing with one
another in love.
Make every effort to
keep the unity of
the Spirit through
the bond of
peace.**

*—Ephesians
4:2-3*

12

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Of all the things you do in parenting, the most important job you have is to train your children to be disciples of Jesus Christ. The Bible is the guidebook for life, and when people, including children, follow it, good things happen.

YOUR PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Illustrate for your children that the Bible is relevant and that the Christian life is exciting.

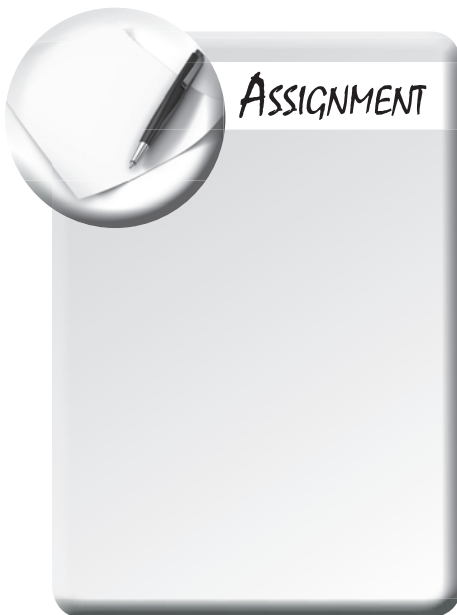
WHEN KIDS OPEN THE BIBLE, THEY SHOULD FEEL A SENSE OF EXCITEMENT AND ANTICIPATION. Words like discovery, interesting, amazing, and wow should come to their minds. That attitude is often caught from others. The Bible has different kinds of genre. There are books of history, letters to individuals and churches, poems, songs, and prophecy. Every one of those kinds of passages though provide us with lessons for life.

Whenever you read the Bible or tell one of its stories, talk about the lesson learned. That discussion helps everyone recognize that the scriptures are relevant to daily life. The Bible provides more than entertainment. It teaches life lessons that have application to every age.

Some parents are tempted to overemphasize the scriptures during times of correction. Although it is true that the scriptures are valuable for correction, they are also a treasure of wisdom for life. Be careful to share the balance so that kids don't get a skewed opinion of God through your training.

ASSIGNMENT

Read the Bible from the eyes of a child. Choose a book of the Bible and just start



reading it. You'll be touched and then you can share that idea or story with your child. Start a conversation with your child this way, "You're not going to believe the story I just read in the Bible. That was wild!" Then tell the story in a dramatic or interesting way. If you're genuinely surprised, touched, or amazed by God, then kids will catch it too.



A STEP FORWARD

You might want to read through the Bible in a year from the eyes of a child. What stories or teachings are particularly helpful? What lessons would help in the family, at school, or in the neighborhood? As you think about the success principles in God's Word from a child's perspective, it will be easier to share those truths spontaneously.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for your Word. I know that it convicts me and teaches me. In fact, I've grown to love my times in the scriptures because of the closeness I feel to you as a result of reading what you've put in it. Please help me to share that same excitement with my children so they too can know you and feel and excitement about life with you. Amen.

**All Scripture
is God-breathed
and is useful for
teaching, rebuking,
correcting and
training in
righteousness.**

—2 Timothy 3:16

13

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

There are things you can do on good days that you can't do on bad days. Good days are those days when a child is trying to overcome the weakness you've been working on. He's tried to respond better to instruction or is controlling his anger and not exploding when he doesn't get his way. At the end of a good day, you're encouraged, believing that there may actually be hope for a positive future.

BOOKMARK GOOD DAYS

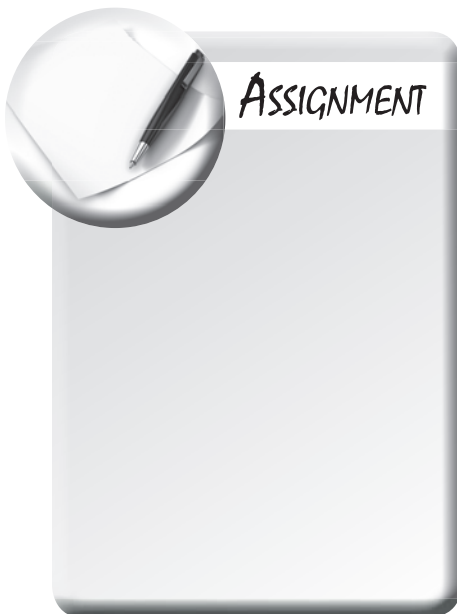
PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Look for ways to offer genuine praise to a child who is making progress.

AFFIRMATION GOES A LONG WAY WITH KIDS. In particular, it frames life for them so that they know and understand when progress is happening. Remember that the praise needs to be genuine. If today was a bad day, then this isn't the time to pretend that everything went well. Kids know when the affirmation is genuine, so look for ways to point out progress.

It's also important to focus on the heart, not just behavior. When a child is trying to be nice to his sister, he's demonstrating growth in the area of kindness inside his heart. Measure growth by evaluating tendencies and patterns. The

most effective praise takes place when you compliment something that the child's conscience is also affirming. Catching children doing what's right is always better than focusing on the wrong.



ASSIGNMENT

Identify three things that your child tends to do right and one thing that your child is working on. Then plan your statements using appreciation and admiration. Appreciation says “thank you” for what the child has done and often focuses on actions. Admiration is even stronger because it looks at the heart.

Start your statement to your child this way, "I admire the way you..." and watch your child's response. Those kinds of words can have a profound effect.



A STEP FORWARD

It's easy to emphasize the negative because those are the things that bother us and cause frustration. We tend to be quite motivated to put energy into managing negative behavior. It takes work to emphasize the positive and to look at the good that's happening in a child's life. The focus on the positive isn't just helpful for the child. It's also beneficial for parents who can become discouraged sometimes by the continual work of parenting.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for your grace that pours over me when I need it most. I feel sometimes like I just need to sit under the faucet of your grace and soak in the affirmation that you pour out on me. Thank you for being merciful. I'm grateful for what you've done for me and I'm amazed at your love. Please help me to communicate that same thing to my child today. Amen.

**As a father
has compassion
on his children,
so the LORD has
compassion on
those who fear
him.**

—Psalm 103:13

14

Don't lose hope. Work hard to do the right thing, and hang in there. Your children need you, and your persistence will pay off in the end. It's amazing how much power one parent has. Although your efforts may be thwarted sometimes, keep working hard at your parenting and your kids will reap the benefit. Children watch how you live.

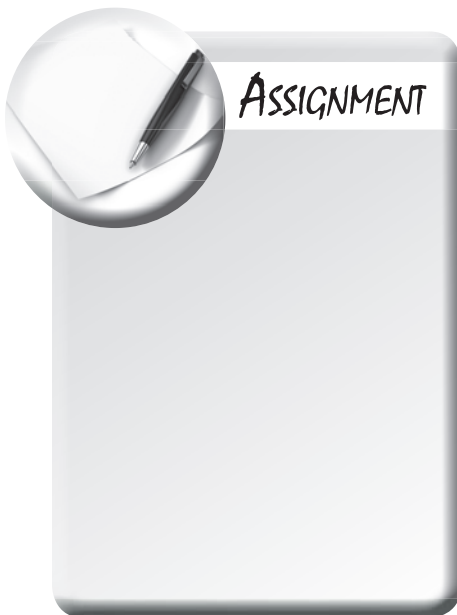
DON'T MINIMIZE YOUR PARENTING POWER BECAUSE YOUR PARTNER DOES IT DIFFERENTLY

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Don't get discouraged with opposition. Hang in there and do the hard work of parenting trusting God for the results.

PARENTING IS A WALK OF FAITH. Sometimes the resistance from kids or the busyness of life is frustrating, but one of the greatest points of discouragement happens when others aren't on board with your vision for parenting.

Although you'll want to do everything you can to educate, persuade, and compromise for the sake of unity, sometimes it just doesn't happen. Remember that you're serving God, not men. You're parenting out of obedience to the Lord, not only for some hopeful result. We all wish that things would turn out well and that we would get great results from our efforts, but the reality is that we serve God because it's the right thing to do. Keep your focus on the Lord in order to keep moving in the right direction.



Remember that you're serving God, not men. You're parenting out of obedience to the Lord, not only for some hopeful result. We all wish that things would turn out well and that we would get great results from our efforts, but the reality is that we serve God because it's the right thing to do. Keep your focus on the Lord in order to keep moving in the right direction.

ASSIGNMENT

Make a list of three parenting values that are most important to you. Write them down. If they are points of contention then look for ways to persuade others to work with you. If

that won't work, look for non-offensive ways to accomplish your objective. Stick to your plan while at the same time being sensitive to the Lord's direction for your heart. Listing the most important values will help you put emphasis on the major things and let some of the minor differences go.



A STEP FORWARD

Remember that you can't control the outcome of your kids or others who work with them. Although much of your work with children focuses on changing them, in the end your most important task is to follow the Lord. It's obedience to him and affirmation from him that is the most important motivation that you can find.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, please give me strength to do the right thing in the midst of opposition of any kind. I want to serve you with my whole heart and I can get discouraged when others don't share that same passion. But, Lord, please help me to keep my focus on you and the work that you've given me to do. Amen.

**Whatever
you do, work
at it with all your
heart, as working
for the Lord, not for
men, since you
know that you will
receive an
inheritance from the
Lord as a reward.
It is the Lord
Christ you are
serving.**

*—Colossians
3:23-24*

15

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Honor carries the idea of going above and beyond. That means seeing what needs to be done and doing it, and solving problems instead of leaving them for others.

TEACH KIDS TO ADD ENERGY TO FAMILY LIFE

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Use the word honor in your family and look for ways to teach it.

KIDS HAVE A JOB DESCRIPTION IN LIFE THAT INVOLVES TWO WORDS: OBEY AND HONOR. God has hidden within those two concepts the secret ingredients kids need to be successful in life. Parents are God's tools to teach them.

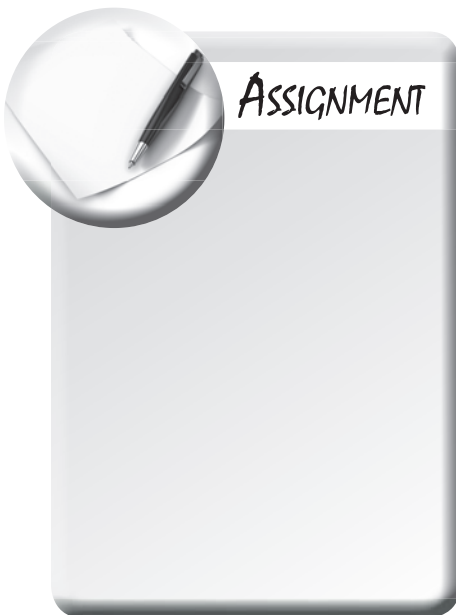
Many parents emphasize obedience to get things done. If 15-year-old Ginny leaves the bathroom counter a mess, Mom might use obedience to address it by saying, "Ginny, you need to go in and clean up the bathroom counter." Or, she could use honor by saying, "Ginny, I want you to go into the bathroom and do an honor check." Now Ginny must see what needs to be done and do

it. Honor transfers the responsibility to the child. It's a powerful tool. When kids learn to look around and add extra to the situation, value people, and have a good attitude, they're building internal strength that others will admire.

Honor is a powerful tool in family life and practicing it as a family can go a long way to enhance the relationships in your home and the character in your child's heart.

ASSIGNMENT

Honor adds energy to family life. Have a discussion with your kids and talk about the



difference between a drain and a fountain. The first sucks energy out of the environment, but the latter adds something delightful. The words kids use often reflect a drain or a fountain mentality. Use the illustration for a day to point out fountain words and drain attitudes in your home and look for ways to inspire children to become fountains.



A STEP FORWARD

You're already honoring your kids every day. You drive them places, buy food they enjoy, and look for ways to solve their problems. Now you want to use that term "honor" in your dialogue. "Son, I bought your favorite ice cream when I was at the store to honor you." Later, you'll use the same word to challenge an attitude that is dishonoring.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for honoring me by picking me out to be your child and by sending your son Jesus Christ to be my savior. I am so grateful for the honor you have shown me. I, in turn, want to honor you with my whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. Please use my experience with my kids to train me to be a person of honor with you and with others. Amen.

**Honor
one another
above yourselves.**

—Romans 12:10

16

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

It's not usually the tasks that create the tension in family life. It's the problems that get in the way. At that moment, you as a parent have to make an important decision. Are you going to move the problems down to tasks, or are you going to escalate them to conflict?

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TASKS, PROBLEMS, AND CONFLICT

PARENTING PRINCIPLE _____

Work with your family to develop a plan for addressing conflict in your home.

IF YOU DON'T HAVE A PLAN FOR DEALING WITH DISAGREEMENTS AND OFFENSES, THEN LIKELY EMOTIONS WILL DICTATE INTERACTIONS. One of the signs of a successful family is that they have a conflict management plan.

The target in your plan is to address unbridled emotions. When emotions get out of control, people get hurt, and negative patterns develop. Some family members may be vocal. Others may use manipulation or attack people with little jabs. Those subtle attacks are just as deadly and must be challenged in family life.

Each argument or episode gives you an opportunity to debrief, apologize, and hold people accountable. Remember that change takes time but teaching and persistence in this area pays off with huge rewards.



ASSIGNMENT

Spend some time in a family meeting discussing ways to address problems and conflict in your home. What are some rules of engagement that everyone can abide by? Write them down in a list and allow family members to

contribute to the list. On the list should be things to avoid and things to do. Tweak the list over the next several weeks and have regular meetings to evaluate how you're doing using the ideas on the list to solve problems and manage conflict situations.



A STEP FORWARD

Don't forget to apologize yourself to your children and to your spouse when you make a mistake and allow your emotions to rule. You may be right about the issue, but the way you address the problem may have been unwise. Your apology can go a long way to model good conflict management in a home.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, please give me peace. I need that especially when certain things happen. You know my triggers Lord. You know the things that tend to upset me. Would you please give me your peace in my heart that will allow me to handle the problems of life without allowing them to escalate to conflict? I want to serve you with all of my heart and I know that it starts in my home. Please do a work in me and allow me to practice your grace and wisdom with my family.

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

—Romans 12:18

17

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Children who argue have good character qualities, such as persistence, perseverance, determination, creativity, and an ability to communicate their ideas. The problem with arguing is that your child views you as an obstacle, a mountain to tunnel through. The child who argues often lacks sensitivity, humility, and a proper respect for authority.

IT TAKES TWO TO ARGUE, BUT ONLY ONE TO STOP

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Learn to catch arguing early and head it off with a different approach.

ARGUING OFTEN CREATES TENSION AND PUTS FAMILY MEMBERS AT ODDS. That tension continues to build in both parties as the argument continues. It does little good to continue a discussion that has turned into an argument. The difference has to do with the desires of one or more of the people in the argument.

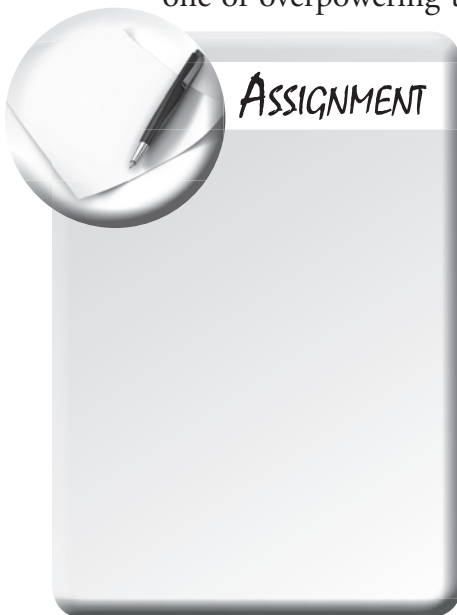
If the goal of the discussion is to listen and learn, then dialogue can be beneficial. However, if understanding is put to the side and the goal becomes one of overpowering the other person with logic or information, then

demandingness puts a strain on the relationship. Be on the lookout for demandingness in your home and when you see it, don't validate the child's pursuit by engaging in continued interaction.

Even though dialogue is often good, it can be detrimental when it encourages a negative pattern of arguing in a child.

ASSIGNMENT

Study your family and identify pairs of relationships where demandingness in the form of arguing takes place. One child may be



bossy to another or a child may have a habit of arguing. Have a private meeting with a child who is tempted in this way and begin creating awareness by pointing the problem out and requiring the child to stop the process. Work to remove negative argumentation from your home and replace it with affirmation and listening. Great things then happen in family relationships.



A STEP FORWARD

By refusing to engage with a child who argues, you're teaching a valuable lesson. Kids learn how to interact more constructively when parents are firm about the way kids interact, not just about the things they do. The same principles discussed here about arguing can be used with other forms of disrespect such as sarcasm, hurtful words, and verbal jabs. Look for patterns of negative communication and challenge them with a vision for something better.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Father, I ask that you would give me sensitivity to negative patterns in the interaction within my family. Please help me know how I might be part of a bigger solution as I try to respond or be quiet in each situation. I want to be used by you as I serve you within my home. Please teach me and give me wisdom to be the person you want me to be and to challenge others in ways that promote healing and grace. Amen.

**Let your
conversation be
always full of
grace, seasoned
with salt, so that
you may know how
to answer
everyone.**

*—Colossians
4:6*

18

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

As an adult, if you go to an authority and ask for something and receive a no answer, you usually have the freedom to ask one more time to clarify yourself or to further understand. However, if you receive a no answer a second time, then pushing further would be considered rude, crossing the line of what's socially appropriate. Children often don't know that line exists. They just keep pushing and pushing, and parents get frustrated, often ending the dialogue with an angry response.

MOVE FROM THE ISSUE TO THE PROCESS

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Use your inner anger cues as an indicator that something may be wrong in the way your child is treating you.

WHEN YOU FEEL FRUSTRATED WITH YOUR CHILD'S APPROACH, THERE'S PROBABLY SOMETHING GOING ON THAT NEEDS SOME DISCIPLINE. Is your child being demanding? Is she asking the same question over and over again and being rude or insensitive? Your anger can be a good indicator that something is wrong, but don't use your anger to solve the problem by lashing out at your child. Rather, move into your plan of firmness or training.

The key is to see patterns of poor interaction, manipulation, and disrespect, and have a plan ready to use. The plan addressed the way people treat each other. Once you have the plan then you can use the emotional signals to remind you to use the plan and move forward. The plan may involve an awareness campaign by making observations, or it may mean consequences if necessary. The key is to not continually stay on the issue of the dirty shirt, or the party, or the denied video request. The key is to move away from that issue and talk about how the child is treating you or others.



ASSIGNMENT

Have a family meeting and talk about the difference between the issue and the process.

The issue is whatever we're talking about or what the child wants. The process has to do with *how* the child is talking about it. Using words like please and thank you have to do with the process. Yelling, meanness, and hurtful words are a negative demonstration of process. Provide a way for every person in a family to point out negative process words or actions. Drawing attention and then taking action can move your family into a nurturing and encouraging direction.



A STEP FORWARD

Being polite, thoughtful, and caring are all ways to demonstrate positive communication. It's amazing how often God gives instructions about how to treat people with kindness, even when others don't respond the same way. We treat others well, not always because they deserve it, but because that's the kind of people we want to be. But kindness and graciousness doesn't mean leniency with children. You don't want to minimize the training your children need just so that you can be nice to them. Both firmness and graciousness are important.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I ask that today you'll help me to make my words gracious as I work with my children. Also, please show me how to help them to also be gracious to others. I ask that you would change and mold the hearts of my children to be what you want. I pray that you would do that deep work in their lives to help them understand how to live for you, even in our own family. Amen.

**May these
words of my
mouth and this
meditation of my
heart be pleasing in
your sight, LORD,
my Rock and my
Redeemer.**

—Psalm 19:14

19

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Some parents think the best way to motivate kids is to give them things as rewards. Those external motivations are part of a behavior modification parenting philosophy. Although they may bring about some change, there are many other stronger forms of motivation that come from the heart. One of those is the inner belief that I'm becoming a stronger person, or the desire to please God and others.

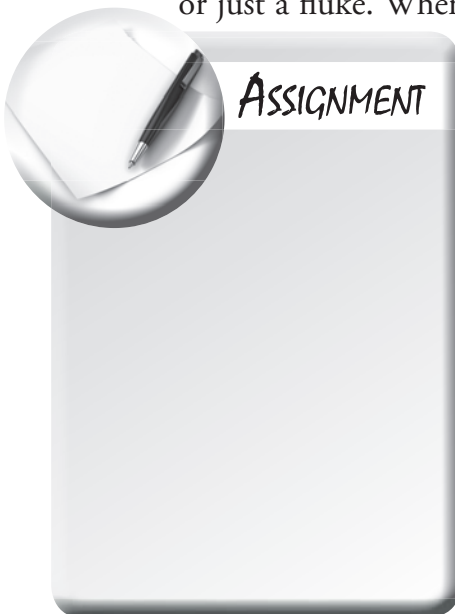
AFFIRM APPROXIMATELY RIGHT BEHAVIOR

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Offer genuine praise and encouragement as you see progress in your child toward growth and maturity.

ONE OF THE REASONS THAT CHILDREN BENEFIT FROM GENUINE PRAISE IS THAT IT HELPS THEM FORM BELIEFS ABOUT THEMSELVES AND THEIR ACTIONS. In the same way that criticism can stifle a child's confidence and creativity, positive comments often foster beliefs that progress is happening and that work in an area of life is worth it.

Praise has a way of affecting the heart of a child. Kids often have internal questions about their worth, value, and competence. Even when they do well, they sometimes have a hard time knowing whether it's a sign of something good or just a fluke. When others make positive comments then a frame is created around life, giving perspective, hope, and a positive view of the future.



ASSIGNMENT

Keep a daily record of intentional praise statements made by you to members of your family. The goal isn't to give to all equally, but rather, to genuinely affirm effort and accomplishment toward the goal of maturity and responsibility. Be creative with your comments, realizing that they are often gifts of God's grace to your children through you.



A STEP FORWARD

The strongest way to make praise a habit in your life is to view it as part of your calling before God. He has equipped you with the ability to see certain things that warrant an encouraging word.

If you deliver God's grace to others in the form of praise, it will develop into part of your identity as a child of God.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I ask that you would make me a person who is an encouragement to others. Help me to see the good in others and give me the right words to say that reveals those observations in a nutritious way. Although I may start practicing and work on changing my behavior, I pray that you would make this effort come naturally to me from my heart. Amen.

**Finally,
brothers,
whatever is
true, whatever
is honorable,
whatever is just,
whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely,
whatever is
commendable,
if there is any
excellence, if there
is anything worthy
of praise, think
about these
things.**

*—Philippians
4:8*

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Kids need discipline. They need to be corrected. They're young and immature. But many parents move too quickly to correction strategies that are harsh instead of those that are most effective. We're not suggesting that you be lenient with your kids. On the contrary, a biblical parenting philosophy recognizes that firmness teaches character, but the way you approach the situation can mean all the difference between whether the correction is accepted, resulting in change, or resisted, resulting in continual foolishness.

IT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO BE RIGHT— YOU ALSO WANT TO BE WISE

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Step #1 is to see what's wrong. Step #2 is to choose wisely how to communicate it.

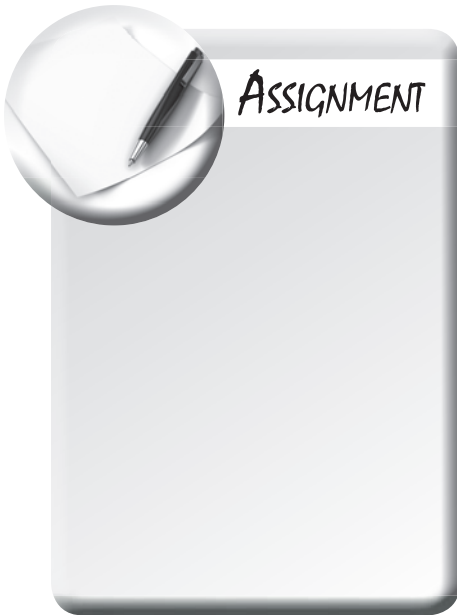
UNFORTUNATELY SOME PARENTS DON'T REALIZE THAT THERE IS A SECOND STEP. Rather they react to problems and engage in counter-productive measures that often do more harm than good. All children need correction, but the goal is not to simply give a consequence. Rather, the goal is a changed heart. Reaching a child in a significant way often requires an approach that isn't typical.

Kids tend to build resistance against the commonly used tactics of their parents, whatever those might be. Some kids develop patterns of manipulation toward the parent who uses a more relational strategy. Others fall into patterns of defiance toward the parent who tends to always be direct and forceful. By choosing the approach wisely, parents can often maneuver around the tendencies a child has and the end result is greater cooperation and change.

Sometimes parents excuse change because they believe that they're doing a good thing. And they are. But good for one child may not be best for another. Only when parents are willing to make changes that best suit the situation are they more effective.

ASSIGNMENT

Try challenging your child differently than you have in the past. It might mean a more firm approach for some, but for others it might be a sit-down meeting with a discussion. Others may choose to raise a problem and listen first, while



someone else might use a humorous or fun way to connect. Try something new and measure the response.



A STEP FORWARD

There are many good ways to raise children. Of course, there are many poor ways to work with kids too. The best methods are the ones that work for that particular child. All children are unique and what works with one child likely won't work with another one. Be creative and you just might find greater responsiveness in your child.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, it's amazing how you've equipped different people with unique gifts and abilities. You know that I tend to gravitate toward certain strengths that I have. But I want to be most effective for you as I serve you in my home. Please help me to grow and give me wisdom to know how best to work with my family. Amen.

**To the
weak I became
weak, to win the
weak. I have
become all things to
all people so that by
all possible means
I might save
some.**

*— 1 Corinthians
9:22*

21

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Character is often learned under pressure. It's true that life imposes its own pressure on our lives, but sometimes kids can't feel it. That's when parents must help them feel the pressure a little more. We aren't suggesting that you be mean to your kids, but it's often helpful to apply strategic pressure at times so kids can strengthen areas of weakness.

USE FIRMNESS TO FOCUS ON CHARACTER

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Use firmness to teach children character.

THERE ARE MANY GOOD WAYS TO PARENT. Some parents are more relational and others are more structured. Where you tend to fall on that continuum may reflect your personality or preferences, or maybe you've adjusted your approach to match the particular needs of your child. All kids are different, some need more gentleness and others need more firmness. Most children need both.

Firmness draws that line that says, "This is how we're going to do it." When parents are firm, kids see convictions, recognize limits, and must conform to your requirements. These small steps often guide a child's heart to embrace new ways of doing things and new ways of thinking. Those new patterns are often called character. Kids need character in order to manage the challenges

of life. When parents are firm, kids develop the new patterns necessary to handle life situations.



ASSIGNMENT

Identify an area in your home where you're trying to be firm. It might be a bedtime with a teenager, or keeping kids moving in the morning, or requiring an older elementary age child take a regular shower. To help yourself address the resistance you're experiencing, identify the character quality you're working on. Maybe it's self-discipline with a bedtime,

responsibility in the morning, or cleanliness with a shower. Keep that character quality in mind as you move forward. It will help you stay the course and may provide opportunities to explain a bit more to your child about why you're being firm in this area.



A STEP FORWARD

Kids need character to learn and grow. Parents are often the teachers. Some parents overemphasize flexibility when accomplishing tasks and others overemphasize structure. A careful balance is in order. Work on that balance in your own parenting and your kids will benefit greatly.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Father, I ask that you would help me understand my child and guide me to know what's best in my approach. Conflict is a challenge and sometimes firmness gets sacrificed in those moments. I need your leadership in my life to know what's best and I need your courage and strength to hang in there when I feel like quitting. I ask you to guide me in my approach with my child. Amen.

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

22

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Maintaining a balance between firmness and relationship is essential for good parenting. If you find yourself erring on one side or the other, you'll see negative symptoms in your children. The parent who overemphasizes relationship may find that a child takes advantage and doesn't respond properly, resulting in patterns of arguing, resistance, or complaining.

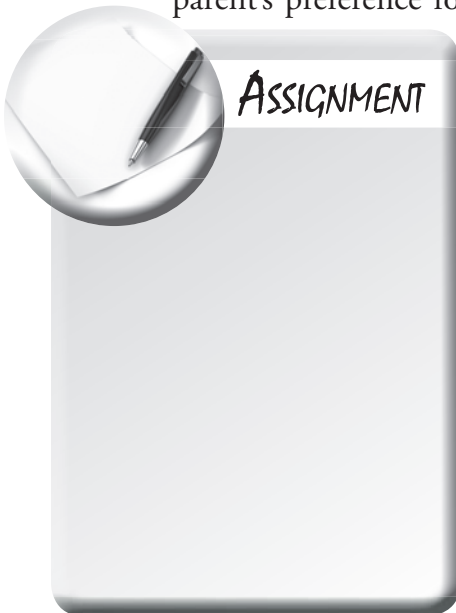
CHILDREN CAN ONLY TAKE AS MUCH PRESSURE AS THE RELATIONSHIP WILL ALLOW

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Love kids in ways that connect with their hearts.

KIDS NEED RELATIONSHIP. It's through relationship that values and convictions travel. Too much firmness can cause rebellion and bitterness. It's relationship that wins the day. Some children require a lot of firmness. Seeing the resistance in their child, some pull back on the firmness when the real solution is to add more relationship.

Kids like to be loved in different ways. That's particularly challenging if a parent's preference for loving is different than the child's. The reality



is that relationship often takes work and it's the ultimate demonstration of servanthood. Learning more about your child and discovering ways to connect can strengthen relational bonds necessary for other parts of parenting you want and need to do.

There is a fundamental connection between love and discipline. Both are essential. Balance is important.

ASSIGNMENT

Reflect on a time when you significantly connected with your child. What made that

connection? Is that typical of your child's tendency to connect? Look for ways to identify what it is that makes a heart connection with your child and try to recreate that experience using the same kind of technique. It may take some experimenting, but when you discover ways to connect with your child, make it a part of your job to serve the Lord by loving your child.



A STEP FORWARD

Parenting is work. Relationships often take time and effort. Likely you'll have to modify your approach at times so much that it feels like it hurts. It's painful to give in ways that someone else needs sometimes. That stretching that you do is good for your own heart, helping you to be the person God wants you to be.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I thank you for the model you are as you parent me. You give me both love and discipline and I desperately need them both. Please teach me how to make that important balance with my own children and how to communicate my love in ways that they can understand. Please teach me more about how to be like you as I serve you in my family. Amen.

**My son,
do not make
light of the Lord's
discipline, and do
not lose heart when
he rebukes you,
because the Lord
disciplines the one
he loves, and he
chastens everyone
he accepts as
his son.**

*—Hebrews
12:5-6*

When parents understand and embrace the difference between punishment and discipline, it changes the way they relate to their kids. Instead of giving a consequence to balance the scales of justice, they look to teach and to train. Instead of viewing discipline times as annoying detours on the path of life, they see them as opportunities to further develop the character in their kids. A small change in perspective can make all the difference.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PUNISHMENT AND DISCIPLINE

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Focus on discipline and training as you correct your kids.

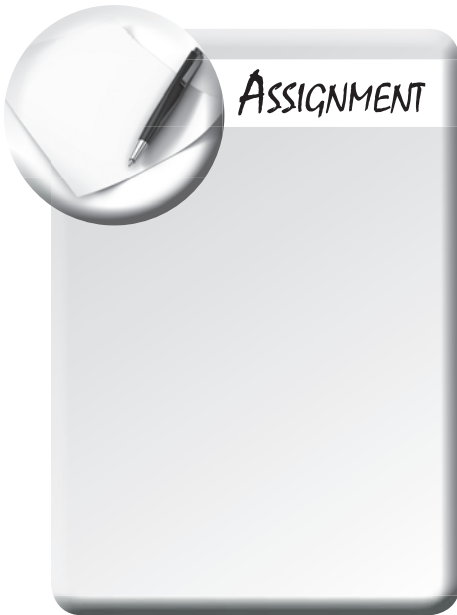
CORRECTION IS JUST ONE OF THE TASKS OF PARENTING BUT AN IMPORTANT ONE THAT HELPS MOLDS A CHILD'S THOUGHTS AND BELIEFS, NOT JUST THE BEHAVIOR. Although many parents would agree with the statement that correction is all about discipline, many tend to think in terms of punishment, offering consequences for misbehavior.

When parents focus on training instead, kids often make significant progress. Most children need remedial work in their lives in one way or another. A child who is disrespectful, lazy, mean, or easily distracted, needs extra work to bring their character up to where it should be developmentally. That work is not just about giving consequences when the child demonstrates weakness, but rather requires practice to do what's right to build new ways of thinking and new patterns of behavior.

Discipline, not punishment, offers that positive direction to kids. When parents look for ways to discipline instead of punish they begin to develop strategies for change. A combination of teaching, practice, and coaching produce longer lasting results in a child's life.

ASSIGNMENT

Think about the last three times you had to correct one of your kids. Before you analyze how you handled each of these situations, just jot them down. Then, take a moment and reevaluate your response. Were your words and actions focused more on punishment or discipline? How might you have made some



adjustments in the way you approached the situation to focus more on discipline?



A STEP FORWARD

Discipline may involve a consequence. It's not just about being positive.

However, if a consequence is necessary, then a positive dialogue is important to turn the incident into a training experience. Keep in mind that a consequence isn't always necessary. Sometimes a warning, a rebuke, or a firm stand can also communicate the message, but in each case, a challenge

toward doing what's right, not just a focus on what went wrong, is valuable.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for correcting me in ways that move me forward in life. I need that personally and I'm grateful for your love. Please help me rise above the daily frustrations of life to something more strategic with my kids. I need practical ideas that I can do that will help me reach the heart of my child. I ask for your insight and your perspective as I serve my family. Amen.

**My son,
do not despise
the Lord's
discipline, and do
not resent his
rebuke.**

—Proverbs 3:11

Patterns take time to adjust and often require that parents focus on relational routines. The next time you're frustrated with the interaction you see from your child, stop and consider whether it's a pattern. If so, try to figure out what the triggers are that get it started. Next, identify some new ways to relating, and then practice them over and over again.

DON'T PRACTICE IN THE GROCERY STORE—THAT'S THE FINAL EXAM

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Identify public misbehavior as an indicator of something to work on in private.

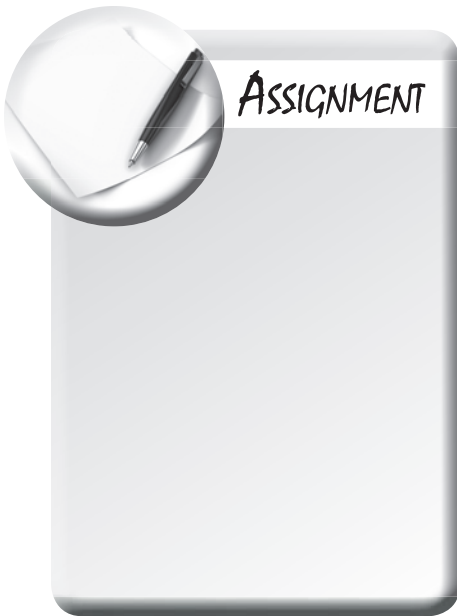
SOME KIDS DO BETTER IN PUBLIC THAN THEY DO AT HOME, WHILE OTHER KIDS DEMONSTRATE SOME SIGNIFICANT BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS WHEN THEY ARE OUTSIDE THE HOME. Parental embarrassment or anger are often indicators that a problem exists and needs a bit of work to bring about some change.

Simulating public situations at home can provide opportunities to practice responding correctly. If a child can't accept no as an answer at the grocery store, he probably has similar problems at home. More practice at receiving a no answer and responding well to it, may be just what's needed. The same is true for the child who has problems greeting others, handling frustration, or interrupting you.

When you see public misbehavior, take time to identify what the underlying character weakness is, and work on it more strategically at home. Then use the public situations to demonstrate to you and your child that the strategies practiced at home also work with others.

ASSIGNMENT

Identify one way that you wish your child would respond better in public. It might have to do with manners, relationships, disappointment, or frustration. Talk with your child about what you see and explain why you're going to work on it in private. Write down some specific steps your child might do in that



situation and then practice at home looking forward, with your child, to the next public test of your practice sessions.



A STEP FORWARD

It's not best to pretend that things are all good on the outside, while at the same time hiding significant weaknesses at home. Rather, the best approach is to practice doing the right thing at home so that the public tests are a demonstration of a private reality. Those genuine demonstrations of integrity give children a greater sense

of confidence in themselves and in their family.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I know that, as a family, we represent you. That people are making judgments about you as my Father based on what they see in us. So, I ask that you would help me to guide our family to good and healthy actions in public that not only represent what we do in private, but also reflect what is good, right, and wise. Father, we want to be the people you called us to be and we want our family to be that place where we can demonstrate it to others. Amen.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

—Matthew 5:16

25

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

If parents can learn to anticipate resistance, they can better prepare themselves to remain calm but firm. Sometimes the resistance is an indication of something else going on and requires a listening ear. The parent who is surprised by opposition can easily resort to anger in order to overpower the child into submission, missing a valuable teaching opportunity.

BE PREPARED FOR THE THREE ARENAS OF RESISTANCE

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Be prepared for your child's resistance in order to avoid regretful reactions.

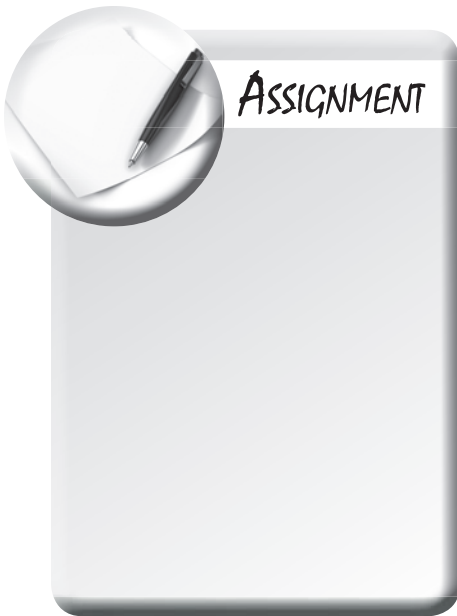
SOMETIMES PARENTS ARE SURPRISED BY A CHILD'S RESISTANCE. It's as if they assume that their children are going to want to obey, clean their rooms, or have a good attitude. Although those are good goals, training is often required. In the meantime, kids may indicate a need for greater training by demonstrating resistance to your leadership.

By recognizing that the resistance often groups itself around three arenas parents can often prepare themselves accordingly. Those three arenas are when you give instructions, when you correct your child and when you say no. That preparation requires that they develop a plan. Determining in advance how you're going to react to your daughter's bad attitude in response to an instruction or your son's blaming when corrected, can make your parenting more strategic.

Remember that your job isn't just to get things done in the family. It's to train your kids. The training often revolves around the way that people treat each other or respond to various challenges of life. By keeping your focus on the larger task of patterns of responses instead of simply getting things done in family life, kids develop the godly character they need for life.

ASSIGNMENT

Evaluate the last time you were surprised by your child's resistance. If you reacted with shock, then you likely weren't prepared to maximize the opportunity. Plan



now for the next time your child responds poorly. How will you handle the situation with more control and intentionally hold your ground or correct in a way that is most productive?



A STEP FORWARD

Responding instead of reacting to life's challenges is important in any situation. It involves more strategy instead of having buttons that can be pushed. But in family life, it's not just about you. It's about influencing others you love toward growth.

That means that in family life, planning your responses in advance is all the more important.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Father, I need your help to prepare my heart each day to face the challenges of my family. I so want to serve you in my home, but sometimes my desires to get things done or to protect myself from offenses puts me on the defense, reacting in poor ways. Please help me each day to carry around your peace and grace in my life to such an extent that I'm able to handle the surprises that come my way. Amen.

**Dear
friends, do not
be surprised at
the fiery ordeal that
has come on you to
test you, as though
something strange
were happening
to you.**

—1 Peter 4:12

Conflict between brothers and sisters is a child's first class in relationships. Your home is the classroom, you are the teacher, and a healthy plan for working on conflict is the curriculum. Each conflict situation becomes an opportunity for teaching children how to relate more effectively.

DISCIPLINE KIDS SEPARATELY FOR SIBLING CONFLICT

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Equip each child with a plan to address the selfishness in each other person in the family.

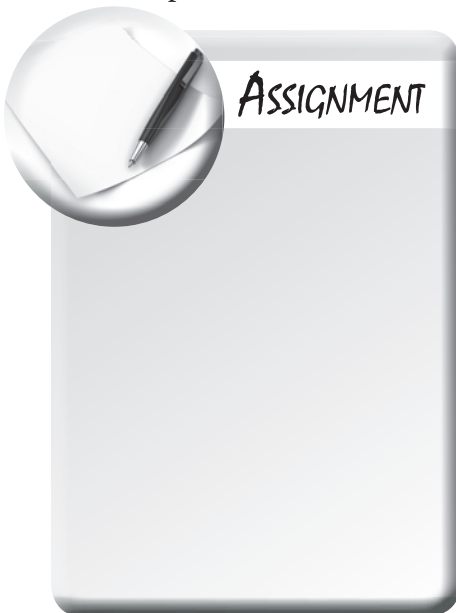
RARELY IS DISCIPLINING CHILDREN TOGETHER FOR THEIR CONFLICT WITH EACH OTHER HELPFUL, EXCEPT WHEN IT COMES TO THE ACTUAL END RESULT OF SOLVING THE PROBLEM. Kids need help to address their own internal reactions to the annoying habits or mean reactions from others.

It's best to work with each child independently, develop a workable plan for that child, and then hold that child accountable in the midst of sibling tension. You can pull that one child out of the playroom and go over the plan, or discipline if necessary. The plan for one child is invariably different than that of another, because all kids are unique and different.

Your individual work with each child does a substantial amount to increase the relational strategies for that child. Kids need help knowing how to handle themselves in conflict situations. The work you do now can go a long way to help them face the same challenges they'll experience for the rest of their lives.

ASSIGNMENT

Create an Action Plan for your child to use when facing relational challenges with others



in the family. Work with your child to develop several ideas. Put them in a list and write them down. The next time your child acts out in a conflict situation, go over the list. Which item might have best helped in this situation? Or, what do we need to add to this list to make it more effective?



A STEP FORWARD

Sibling conflict reveals relational weaknesses in children. If you can figure out what those are, and take the dynamic a part a bit, you'll discover principles your child can use that will equip him for the future. When kids fight, things move fast, and it's sometimes hard to dissect the interaction. Take your time and try to pick out one cause, or pattern, or tactic and look for strategies to address it. Over time, this kind of approach often produces the toolbox of resources your child will use to face challenges.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I want to ask you to help me think straight and remain calm when my children are in conflict. Lord, you know that my emotions start to rise and my thinking becomes cloudy. I need help here to see what needs to be done in these challenging situations. Please provide me with wisdom and peace to be most effective as I serve my family in this area of our home life. Amen.

**Be
completely
humble and
gentle; be patient,
bearing with one
another in love.
Make every effort
to keep the unity
of the Spirit
through the bond
of peace.**

—Ephesians 4:2-3

Angry children need to see that the anger is their problem. When parents jump into the ring, then the focus is taken off the offense, off the child's anger, and a new problem is created in the relationship. By remaining calm and firm, you're able to help your child address his own anger.

AVOID THE BOXING RING

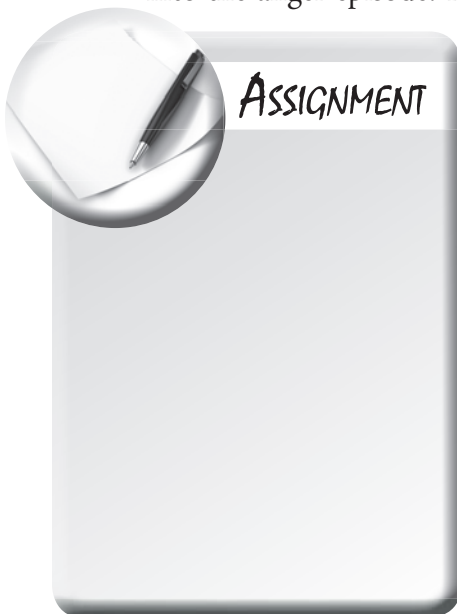
PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Learn to remain calm and firm when your child is upset.

KIDS GET ANGRY. Parents are emotionally connected to their children. That often creates a problem because when kids get angry, parents' emotional temperature often increases. In those instances, parents who react to their kids create an additional problem, and weaken the lesson that could be learned from this particular anger episode.

Kids must learn that their anger is their problem and that life stops until they can settle down and move forward in a healthy way. Kids who bait their parents into a fight, often miss out on those realities. When parents argue or fight with their kids, they in essence, validate the child's reaction.

Although it may be helpful to empathize with a child, it's rarely helpful to enter into the anger episode. Kids need to learn self-control. Although it's hard, a firm, calm approach teaches much more to the child than an angry parental outburst might ever communicate.



ASSIGNMENT

Take some time and evaluate the early warning signals provided by your body that tell you of approaching anger. It may be heightened energy, feeling warm all over, or eyebrows tensing. Use those signals to remind you to take a deep breath, figure out what needs to be done at the moment and take calculated action in order to maximize change.



A STEP FORWARD

Anger rarely contributes to solutions and most often creates more problems. People may change based on your anger episode but they rarely make lasting changes. Look for ways to curb your emotions yet continue to be part of the solution. Strong habits of emotional reaction may be difficult to overcome but the work you do now will benefit both you and your child.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I want to ask you to be the Lord of my emotions. When I start getting out of control or reacting to the intensity I feel inside, would you please remind me of my calling to be at peace with you. I want to serve you with my whole heart, but the part of my heart that contains my emotions wrestles with that commitment. Please help me. Amen.

**Human
anger does not
produce the
righteousness that
God desires.**

—James 1:20

Every successful family needs to have a plan for addressing emotions, so they don't get out of hand. One of the key indicators of maturity is the ability to manage and communicate emotions in a healthy manner. Most parents find themselves frustrated with their children's emotional outbursts and don't know how to respond themselves without getting emotionally involved. A sign of a healthy family is an ability to manage emotions well.

TEACH KIDS TO COMMUNICATE EMOTIONS WISELY

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Help each person in your family develop a personalized plan for handling emotions.

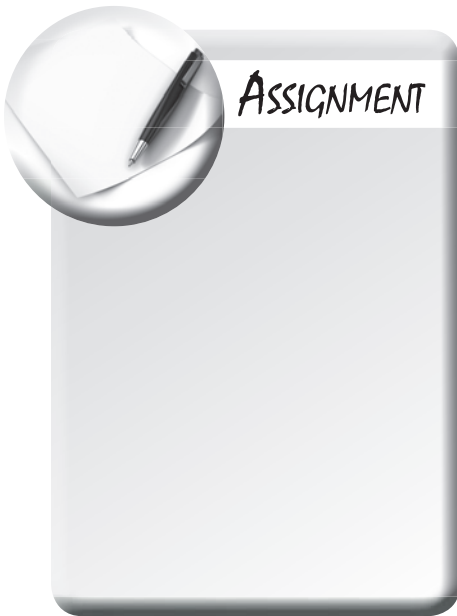
MANY PARENTS REALIZE THAT THEY MUST BEGIN WITH THEMSELVES. Understanding and managing your own emotions is a great place to start. Not only will a good plan contribute to your own peace in challenging situations, but it will give you ideas and empathy for the child who struggles with emotional challenges.

A child needs a specific plan. Sometimes parents try to impose ideas because they can see the solutions necessary. Although that may be helpful on occasion, it's usually best for kids to help take ownership of the solution as well. One of the things that's often helpful in family life is for kids to realize that everyone is challenged by emotions. All family members need a plan and the strategies that work for one person may be different than for another.

The idea of working on emotional challenges as a family can actually bring unity in an area that usually ignites division. It's true that firmness is important when someone acts out emotionally, however, the realization that everyone is working on emotional control is helpful.

ASSIGNMENT

Plan an Emotional Management Brainstorming Meeting for your family. The goal is not to single out one person, but to ask for advice and talk about the different strategies used by family members. Likely some family members will



have little to add because they either haven't thought much about their emotions or because they don't have a good plan. That's why the brainstorming is so helpful. It's possible that this one activity may open a new idea in a child's heart.



A STEP FORWARD

Be sure to point out success when you see it. If you see progress, talk about it. Offer admiration and affirmation.

Sometimes change happens slowly so that kids don't recognize that improvement is taking place. You might even ask the question, "What is your secret to success?" Articulating progress and discussing things that work often provide more insight into things that work.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for emotions. Although sometimes they get in the way, I'm grateful for the emotional sensitivity we see in our family. Please help us learn how to use our emotions in positive ways. Help me gain greater insight into my own heart and give me wisdom to know how to respond constructively to emotional outbursts in our home. Amen.

**Better
a patient person
than a warrior, one
with self-control
than one who takes
a city.**

—Proverbs 16:32

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Be careful of multiple warnings or counting to three, as those strategies can weaken the instruction process. One warning may be helpful to make sure the child has understood the instruction, but then the next step should be to follow through. If you tighten your action point, you'll get angry less frequently, and your children will respond more quickly.

STOP TALKING AND START ACTING

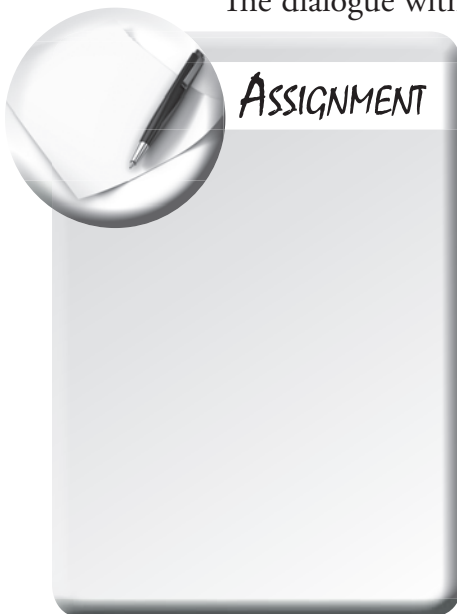
PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Communicate clearly when you expect obedience.

CHILDREN LEARN FROM THEIR PARENTS HOW TO RESPOND TO AN INSTRUCTION. It's actually a fascinating study. When you step back and watch the signals given by the teacher, grandparent, or parent, you discover differences. Some signals work better than others.

Of course, some parents use anger to communicate their action point. That's likely an obvious cue. However emotional cues tax the relationship. Anger may work to get kids moving, but it hinders closeness in a family and builds walls over time. It's better to develop new cues, announce them to your kids, and practice a new plan.

The dialogue with your kids about action point can actually demonstrate to your children that you're trying to be a better parent. That confession often produces a desire on the part of the child to take steps toward cooperation as well. As you work on tightening your action point, you'll clarify expectations and improve the cooperation you have with your child.



ASSIGNMENT

Do an interview with your kids. Make it fun. Ask the question, "How do I communicate to you when I mean business? Do I have a particular look, tone of voice, or words?" Lis-

ten to what your kids say. Try to learn from your children how they know the difference between an idea or opinion and an instruction from you. Use the information you gain to ask the Lord if some changes need to take place and then explain the new ideas to your kids and begin practicing.



A STEP FORWARD

Take time to thank your child for recognizing your cues and for taking steps toward progress. The idea of action point is a way to communicate expectations to children. Sometimes it's the assumed things that create conflict. By having an active discussion about relating patterns you'll not only increase cooperation, but you'll also increase relationship.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I want to have a close relationship with my children. Sometimes the business of family life creates a tension between us. I pray that you'll use your Holy Spirit in my family to draw us close together. Please use ideas like the one here to help me draw close to my kids. I'm grateful for your power and grace and ask that you would use them in our family so that we can enjoy the relationships we have. Amen.

**May the
God who gives
endurance and
encouragement give
you the same
attitude of mind
toward each other
that Christ
Jesus had.**

—Romans 15:5

Sometimes as a parent you have to take the difficult road of saying no because you know what damage a yes may do. Furthermore, your hard work now will provide your children with needed character as they get older.

DON'T GIVE IN TO MANIPULATION

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

When your child challenges your no answer, determine whether your answer is based on a conviction or a preference.

SOMETIMES PARENTS MAKE DECISIONS BASED ON THE CONFLICT LEVEL IN THE HOME. Although, that may be helpful at times, kids can take advantage of a parent by increasing the conflict to the point where parents give in.

It's not wrong to adjust your decisions at times. However, when kids try to force that change, sometimes parents may end up making a decision they regret. One of the ways to stay the course under pressure is to ask whether your decision is based on a conviction or not. Convictions are inner rules that you believe deeply enough to require action. Many convictions for Christians come from the Bible.

If you know that something is dangerous for your child or that your child is requesting something that has the potential to hurt them, you'll likely be able to stand firm. The reality is that many of the requests taken individually may not fit that criterion, but you feel uncomfortable with what you're seeing or what's being asked. By looking at underlying convictions you may be able to sort out the good from the dangerous, and then take action accordingly.



ASSIGNMENT

List some important convictions that are challenged by your child. It may be safety, bad in-

fluences, or wasting time. Use your discomfort with your child's request as an indicator that something may be wrong here. Ask yourself what that is. Keep a journal of things that are most important to you and then have discussions with your kids about those convictions.



A STEP FORWARD

Kids have convictions too. Sometimes teens, for example, differ in their beliefs about what is appropriate or helpful. In those moments it's often helpful to exchange views, allowing your young person to explain and then you also explaining. But the family isn't a democracy and sometimes it's necessary for you to make decisions that you believe to be in your child's or your family's best interest. Understanding your child is important and helpful. But also drawing lines of right and wrong are essential to train and guide your family in the right direction.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I know that you've given your Word as a guide for me and my family. Sometimes I need help applying your Word to the specific situations I face. Would you please teach me your ways and guide my steps. Give me insight into your instructions for life and ways that I can communicate them to my family. Please help me to pass on convictions to my children that are good and helpful. Amen.

**Your
word is a lamp
for my feet, a
light on my path.**

—Psalm 119:105

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

When children don't get their way, they often react emotionally. Parents must remain firm, not only to avoid a dangerous option for their kids, but also to teach the character quality of contentment, being happy with what they have instead of always wanting more. But there needs to be a way for children to appeal to parents. When kids learn a wise appeal, they're able to use it with authorities both inside and outside the home. The idea comes from the Bible.

TEACH KIDS THE WISE APPEAL

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Empower children with a respectful way to appeal to address the obstacles they face.

WHEN KIDS GET A NO ANSWER, SOMETIMES THE SOLUTION IS JUST TO ACCEPT IT AND MOVE ON. However, there are times when the no answer can be challenged respectfully. Sometimes an authority says no for reasons that may not be relevant in a particular situation or because of a lack of a good solution. In some cases, when posed with a reasonable option in a respectful way, an authority may change his mind and allow the no answer to become a yes.

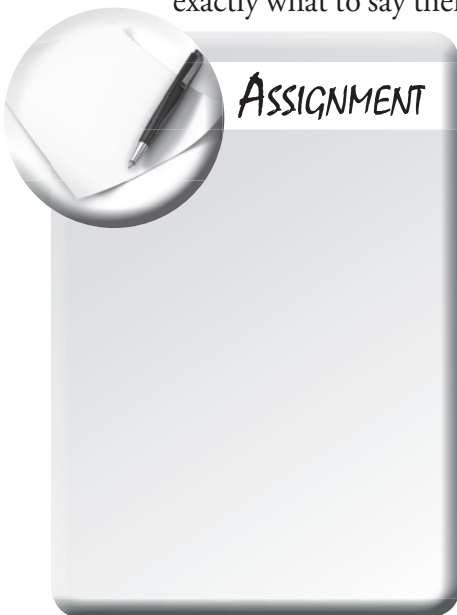
If the wise appeal is going to work, it must be done in a respectful manner. That's why teaching kids a procedure for addressing change is so helpful. When kids know exactly what to say then they can phrase the wise appeal in a way that demonstrates respect.

Of course, it's important that children have enough character to accept a no answer even if it seems unreasonable to them.

Parents can often encourage the use of a wise appeal with adults outside the home as well. Teens might find themselves using a wise appeal often in life, bringing new solutions to arenas where rules have been restrictive or overbearing. When leaders see young people who use a wise appeal, they're often attracted to their strength of character and appreciate their maturity.

ASSIGNMENT

Teach your kids the wise appeal. Explain a time



when you used it in some form. For example, you may have tried to use a coupon that recently expired, asked to get your money back for a purchase you regret, or tried to sit in a seat that is usually reserved for someone else. Exceptions in life happen. Sometimes it's those who are courageous, yet courteous, who receive the benefit.



A STEP FORWARD

As with anything, a wise appeal can be overdone. When a person uses it too much, we call it manipulation. When kids can't accept the no answer even after a wise appeal, that's an indication of a lack of contentment. Using the wise appeal is a privilege and must be kept in balance with other important qualities.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I want to be a person who changes situations for the better. I pray that you would give me the wisdom to know how to appeal to others in a winsome way. I pray that I might even be able to appeal to my kids at times using a wise appeal, not because they are an authority, but because I want to show them honor. Please teach me how to be gracious in challenging experiences. Amen.

**Let your
conversation
be always full of
grace, seasoned
with salt, so that
you may know how
to answer
everyone.**

*—Colossians
4:6*

A theology of repentance is a necessary part of a biblical parenting philosophy. It's a powerful way of looking at correction of children, resulting in deeper, more significant change. Kids need to adjust more than their behavior. They also need to change their hearts.

USE CORRECTION TO CHALLENGE THE HEART

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

When correcting, keep the goal of repentance in mind instead of justice.

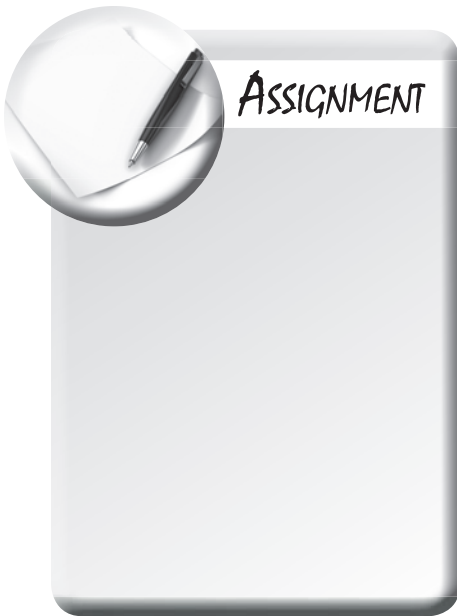
MANY PARENTS MOVE TO CONSEQUENCES TOO QUICKLY. They sometimes believe that it's the consequences that bring about change. Although consequences may be a part of the correction at times, a good correction experience may not involve consequences at all.

The goal of correction is a change of heart, not justice. Working through some strategic dialogue with a child who has failed or who is doing the wrong thing can be far more productive in the end. Requiring answers to questions such as, "What did you do wrong?" can help children learn to take responsibility for their part of the problem.

Ending discipline times with a Positive Conclusion gets kids thinking about their own solutions and moving forward toward a goal. Instead of focusing on what a child shouldn't do, repentance also looks to what the child could do instead. Correction can be a positive experience when parents are strategic about their approach. Keep your eye on the goal and you'll see significant progress through the correction process.

ASSIGNMENT

Look for an opportunity to correct. It doesn't have to be a big offense, but at some point in the correction process ask these questions and watch to see if they lead to a significant inroad into your child's heart. Sometimes it's hard to



tell, but repeated Positive Conclusions often bring about the desired response. The questions are, “What did you do wrong?” “Why was that wrong?” “What are you going to do differently next time?” and then when you’re done make a positive statement such as, “Ok, go ahead and try again.”



A STEP FORWARD

It’s not one Positive Conclusion that changes a child’s heart. It’s the repeated heart work over a period of time that moves the answers to the questions from the

head down to the heart. Challenging kids to make these adjustments is a strategic way to move children in a positive direction.



SOMETHING I’VE LEARNED OR I’M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I know you're trying to mold my thinking and my beliefs about life. I want to see my own heart changing, not just the hearts of my kids. Please keep my heart soft so that I'm ready to see where you want me to make adjustments. Thank you for your patient persistence in my life. Please give me the grace to minister in my family the same way. Amen.

**Opponents
must be gently
instructed, in the
hope that God
will grant them
repentance leading
them to a
knowledge of
the truth.**

—2 Timothy 2:25

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

It's important to remember that the goal of discipline is a changed heart. Sometimes spanking offers a fast and effective tool to bring about heart change. Other times, parents simply use spanking as a behavior modification strategy, thinking they are pleasing God because spanking is in the Bible, but really missing the heart of God because they're simply focusing on behavior and not the heart.

TO SPANK OR NOT TO SPANK

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Choose your correction tools wisely with the goal of heart change in your child.

SPANKING IS JUST ONE OF MANY TOOLS AFFORDED TO PARENTS TO BRING ABOUT A CHANGE OF HEART. Each child is unique and different. One tool may work better with one child than another or in one situation better than another. Some parents have strong feelings about spanking. Yet, there are many examples of adults who were raised with or without spanking who benefited greatly from the correction times in childhood.

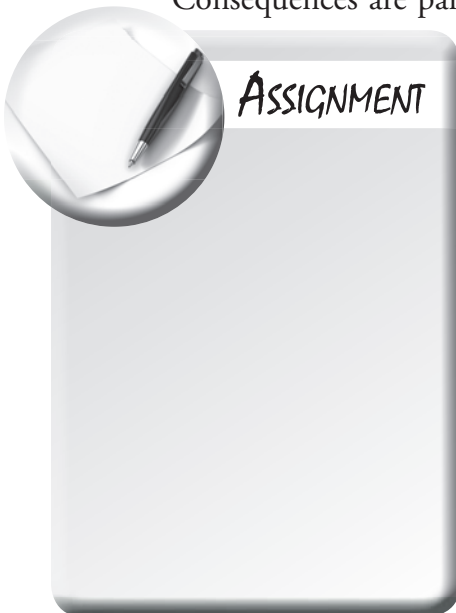
No one tool makes the difference between a child who has a heart that's soft and follows after God and one that doesn't. Correction is much bigger than that.

Consequences are part of any good correction plan, but getting to the goal of a changed heart will also involve teaching, training, dialogue, and coaching toward success.

It is true that some parents misuse spanking by adding anger or by injuring a child. Those kinds of warnings given about spanking should be considered carefully by any parent who chooses to use it. Any parent who justifies an overly harsh approach because a child needs to learn a lesson or because a child deserves it is missing the point of discipline altogether.

ASSIGNMENT

Take an inventory of the correction tools in



your toolbox. Are you using ones that work best to bring about change in your child? Are you using the ones you have in the best way? How might you improve your correction times by adjusting the tools you use and how you use them?



A STEP FORWARD

If you're not seeing progress in your child's challenges but rather see the heart hardening, then you might want to change your approach. A good plan in place should see at least small steps of progress. If it's not working, then get help and look for ways to make adjustments that might be more effective.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, parenting has got to be the toughest job in the world. There are so many challenges that I face as I see weaknesses in my child. Sometimes I feel overwhelmed with the task. I need to trust you more and come before you more often. Lord, please remind me of the small steps of progress. Help me know how I might influence my child's heart for you. Amen.

**If any
of you lacks
wisdom, you
should ask God,
who gives
generously to all
without finding
fault, and it will be
given to you.**

—James 1:5

34

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Other leaders in a child's life may do it differently, allowing you opportunity to teach your kids valuable lessons. The flip side of this principle is also true. Sometimes another leader or authority can teach your child something you haven't been able to communicate successfully.

SUPPORT OTHER AUTHORITIES WHO WORK WITH YOUR KIDS

PARENTING PRINCIPLE _____

Choose and support authorities that will reinforce the values and character you want in your kids.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO HELP YOUR KIDS MOVE FROM WHERE THEY ARE IN THEIR HEARTS TO WHERE THEY NEED TO BE, THEN YOU'LL WANT TO USE A NUMBER OF TOOLS. Correction, teaching, coaching, prayer, and training are all part of that. Another valuable tool is other leaders and authorities.

The goal of music lessons, sports, drama, martial arts, or scouting programs isn't primarily the content and experience those great programs provide. Each one also gives an opportunity for your child to be under the leadership of another authority. All leaders exert their influence differently. Kids often need to learn in practical ways what it means to respond to leadership cues, be corrected in new ways, and stay within the limits provided.

Furthermore, leaders teach character and values to kids such as the need to clean up before you're done, to work hard to accomplish a goal, how to think of others instead of being self-focused, and to follow instructions. Leaders teach the value of self-control, persistence, cooperation, and creativity. When other leaders and authorities are at work, you have the opportunity to interpret life for your child, reinforce the things taught by others, and coordinate what kids are learning with family life.



ASSIGNMENT

Evaluate the exposure your child has with other leaders and authorities and ask, “How can I maximize character lessons learned in that activity?” Since other leaders often lead differently than you, it may take some work to translate the lessons into something your child can understand. So, talk with your child and emphasize the character benefits that come from that particular activity.



A STEP FORWARD

Choose extra-curricular activities based at least in part on the character needs of your child. Look for ways to use other leaders and authorities to move your child along on a map of character development. Spend time discussing the things your child is doing and learning and work with your child and the leader to clarify the values and character lessons your child is learning.



SOMETHING I’VE LEARNED OR I’M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I ask that you would protect my kids as they are under the influence of other leaders and authorities. I pray that you would speak to my children in ways that are consistent with your Word. Use each person to prompt my kids in ways that bring out their uniqueness but also teach them godliness. Teach me how best to choose and support the leaders in my child's life. Amen.

**Let
everyone be
subject to the
governing
authorities, for
there is no authority
except that which
God has established.
The authorities that
exist have been
established
by God.**

*—Romans
13:1*

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

It's important for parents to be in the habit of regularly praying for their kids. Not only does prayer change your child, but it also helps you as a parent align yourself with God and his plan. With his strength you'll be less likely to blow up in anger, and you'll have more wisdom for dealing with life's challenges. Remember that God created your child, so he knows and loves him more than you do.

HOW TO PRAY FOR YOUR KIDS

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Regularly and systematically pray for your kids.

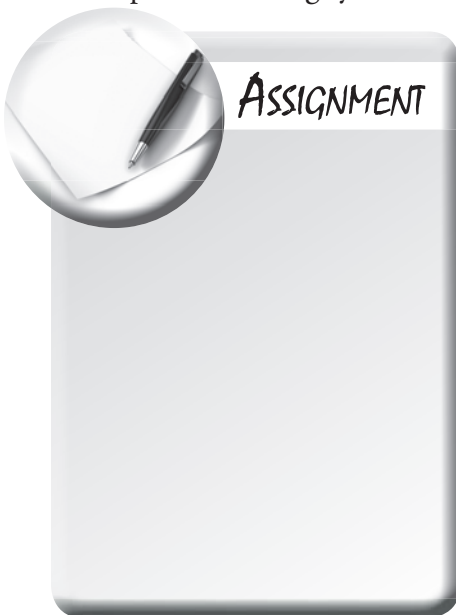
PRAYER HAS MANY IMPORTANT BENEFITS FOR PARENTING. First of all, because God works through prayer, you have an opportunity to continually bring your heart before God regarding your kids. Many parents pray for their kids but tend to do so on an “as needed” basis. When parents feel like their kids are in a challenging situation then parents pray.

We're suggesting something much more intentional. Once you identify a target heart quality in your child such as kindness with siblings, self-control regarding anger, or diligence with homework, you have something specific that you can bring before God every day. That regular time with the Lord does three things. First, it calls upon God's power to change your child. Second, it prepares you to watch God work in your child's life and see opportunities to work where God is working. And third, it helps you think about the goal, and helps you to be on the lookout for practical ideas to accomplish that larger goal.

God provides his grace to us and through us and he often uses prayer to accomplish that work. An intentional prayer life is a productive tool for change in your home. As you have opportunity you can share your prayers with your child and even pray with your child that God would provide his grace today.

ASSIGNMENT

Identify one heart quality your child needs



to develop. Write it down and come before the Lord asking God to give you wisdom to put practical hands and feet to that quality in your child's life. Keep track of the progress and thank God for the privilege of partnering with him to influence your child's life.



A STEP FORWARD

Intentional prayer often requires a bit of organization. Having a journal or a specific time to pray can enhance your prayer life. Writing down thoughts during prayer can help you keep track of the things you want to bring before the Lord. In addition to making requests, be sure to take time to listen to what God has to say. He often speaks to parents during their prayer time in ways that adjust their parenting strategies for the day.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I come before you with my heart. I want to be used by you here in my home. I know that I have a tremendous opportunity to influence my children, but your power and grace is even more powerful. So I ask you to work and help me to stay focused on what you're doing. Please help me to keep my emotions under control so that I can be strategic in the things I do and say. I ask that you'd help me connect with my child in ways that provide new insight into the challenges and specific ways to move forward. Amen.

**Devote
yourselves to
prayer, being
watchful and
thankful.**

—*Colossians 4:2*

Children who have an anger problem don't want to stop. They want to push forward, showing their displeasure, determined to get what they want, and sometimes even manipulative with their anger to control situations. Stopping doesn't seem natural, and kids, who lack self-control, enter anger episodes of various magnitudes.

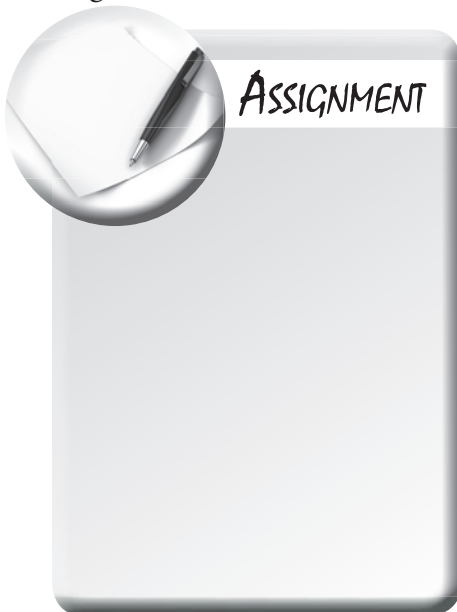
A CHILD'S ANGER PROBLEM NEEDS ATTENTION

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Teach kids to pull back instead of push forward with their anger.

THE REALITY IS THAT ANGER INCREASES ENERGY AND THE IDEA OF STOPPING OR PULLING BACK IS AN UNNATURAL CONCEPT. Parents sometimes fuel the problem by engaging with their kids, unintentionally contributing to the desire to push forward.

When you identify anger cues such as louder voice or intense looks, use them as signals to remind you that the immediate solution is to stop. Each child needs a different solution for stopping. For some it's a deep breath. Others need to get out of the situation. Most need to say different things to themselves.



Self-control under pressure isn't easy, especially if God has given your child an extra scoop of emotion. It takes time, but a clear plan and firmness together with a coaching attitude often wins the day. Small steps of progress are a treasure. Stay at it and, over time, you'll usually see self-control increase and anger episodes decrease.

ASSIGNMENT

Create a T-chart for your child and have your child identify a few things to write in the left column that are personalized solutions. You

as a parent can't write anything on the left side. The right column of the chart is the place for ideas. Those may come from you or maybe the child would benefit from interviewing a few other people for ideas. The goal then is to discover new ideas that the child can transfer over to his plan on the left.



A STEP FORWARD

Watch for a decrease in the intensity, frequency, and recovery time. Point out the progress and talk about what's working. Spend time praying for and with your child. Ask God to provide the grace to manage emotional challenges. Kids can understand that God's grace is the supernatural energy needed to live life his way. We pray and ask God for it and then we submit to him when our desires tug in the wrong direction.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, please help me keep myself under control when my emotions start to rise. I need your grace to flow over me. Please help me to release my own emotions in tough situations and submit to you. I want to help my kids with anger as well. I need your guidance and the wisdom to handle each situation in a way that helps instead of contributing to the problem. Amen.

**My grace
is sufficient for
you, for my power
is made perfect in
weakness.”**

—2 Corinthians 12:9

Problems make great opportunities to teach children to face life's challenges. There are two kinds of people in the world, solvers and whiners. Whiners complain about life, feel like victims, and believe that others cause their problems. If others would just change, then they'd be happy. Until then, they'll just whine about life.

TEACH KIDS TO BE SOLVERS INSTEAD OF WHINERS

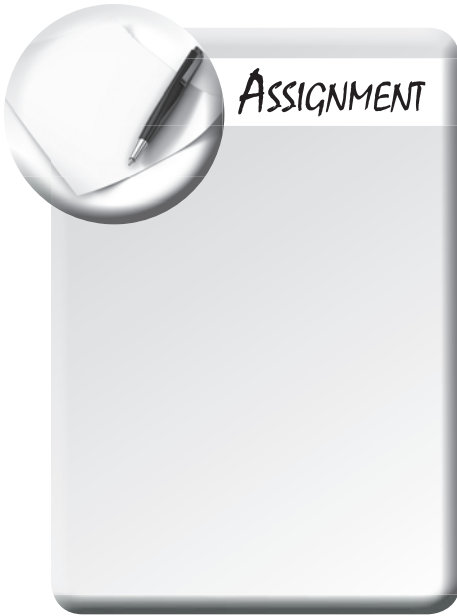
PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Use whining and complaining as an indication that a child needs to work on problem solving.

SOME KIDS GET INTO A HABIT OF EXPRESSING MISERY WHEN THEY ARE UNCOMFORTABLE. That's unacceptable. Unfortunately, some parents validate the whining and complaining by trying to talk their kids into being happy or by explaining all the things the child should be thankful for. Rarely is that helpful and it often encourages the negative habit.

Kids need to know that whining and complaining are not appropriate. Rather, they need to focus on the solution. A child may bring a problem to Dad or Mom to get advice, but rarely is it helpful to simply express displeasure. The way kids bring problems to parents is important. When parents respond by solving the problem of a child who whines then the child learns that whining and complaining work.

Rather the parent needs to transfer the responsibility to the child by calling attention to the poor methodology that the child has chosen to express a problem. When parents stop the process and require kids to think of a solution or to simply be quiet or take some time alone, then kids get the idea that they are responsible for solving life's problems or at least trying to do so, instead of simply complaining about them.



ASSIGNMENT

How will you remind yourself to teach your child to problem solve instead of whine? What are some words you'll use with your child when your child is whining to prompt problem solving? Write down your plan and be ready for the next opportunity to do some significant teaching.



A STEP FORWARD

Many times the first cue that your child is whining or complaining is the emotion you feel inside. Your annoyance or

frustration can be the warning sign that something is wrong and help you to move into your plan. Sometimes parents view anger and frustration as an enemy that hinders their progress. Rather, it would be more productive to use the emotional signals as indicators that something is wrong and move into a plan to solve the problem instead of reacting with that emotion.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, please teach me to be content with my life now. I still want to grow and move forward in your grace, but I don't want to be viewed as a person who whines and complains about life. Please help me to see those tendencies in myself and address them. I also ask Lord, that you would help me to teach my kids to view life from your eyes, changing the things that are changeable but accepting the things that are not. Amen.

**Do not
let any
unwholesome
talk come out of
your mouths, but
only what is helpful
for building others
up according to their
needs, that it may
benefit those
who listen.**

*—Ephesians
4:29*

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Children who don't know how to work hard develop a number of character weaknesses. Danny, age eleven, is demanding, always expecting his mother to serve him. Marissa, age six, is lazy and tries to get out of the simplest tasks in life. In fact, her dad says that she spends more energy thinking about how to get out of work than it would require to do the work in the first place.

CHILDREN NEED TO LEARN HOW TO WORK HARD

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Teach kids how to work hard and give them lots of opportunities to practice.

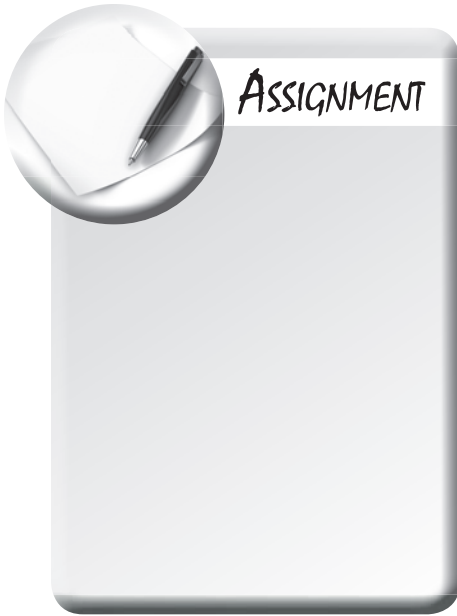
SOMETIMES PARENTS HAVE AN IDEA THAT MAKING KIDS HAPPY WILL HELP THEM TO GROW UP TO BE WELL-ADJUSTED CONTENTED ADULTS. But most of the time the opposite is true. People who learn to sacrifice and work hard are often better able to enjoy life.

Parents who strive to make their kids happy often miss deeper heart qualities that can contribute to contentment. Kids who learn how to work hard learn how to take initiative, contribute to family life and experience a sense of accomplishment. They're also the ones who can step in and help at the ball field or at school. It's surprising to see the difference between kids who have developed a sense of responsibility and those who haven't. There's an inner sense of obligation that these kids develop, and they then aren't put off by a bit of challenging work.

Most kids who are required to do chores resist or complain. It takes some time for them to accept the reality that work is an important part of life. Kids often need more practice at working hard to develop persistence, determination, and the belief that they can actually accomplish the task.

ASSIGNMENT

Evaluate your child to see if more work would be helpful for character development. Don't use the busyness of the schedule to determine whether you can add



chores to your child's schedule. Evaluate what your child needs first and then you can go forward and plan the routine and schedule.



A STEP FORWARD

You might decide that some other good things need to be curtailed in order to do what's best in your home. Every family is unique. Every child has particular needs. Don't allow the culture in your town or the mentality of your community to determine what activities you allow or don't allow for your kids. Be proactive and choose the activities that are most appropriate and be sure to leave time for work.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I know that you're the one who designed work in the first place, way back in the Garden of Eden. I want my kids to value work and to grow up to be responsible people. Please help me know how to maneuver around the resistance of my children and to stay the course when things get tough. I pray that you'd use our work in family life to pull us together, learning how to work as a team, and ultimately serve you. Amen.

**Whatever
you do, work at
it with all your
heart, as working
for the Lord.**

—Colossians 3:23

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

When children compare themselves to each other, they say they want equality, but that's not really true. What each child really wants is to feel special. When you treat them uniquely, and focus on each child independently, you'll be surprised how much the comparison and competition decreases in your family.

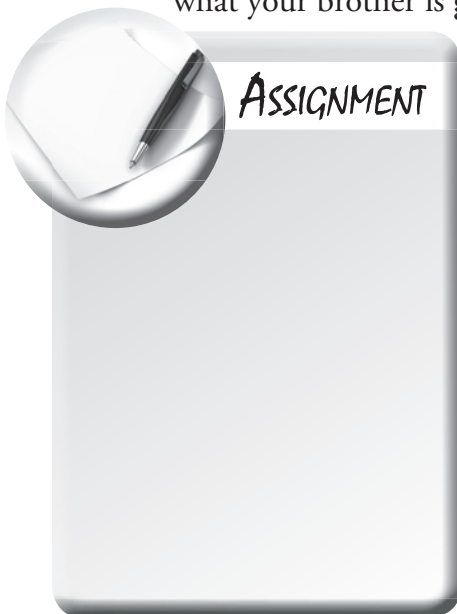
FAIR DOESN'T MEAN EQUAL

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Don't give in to the fairness trap, but rather treat kids uniquely.

THIS IDEA IS ONE OF THE STRATEGIC TRUTHS FOR REDUCING SIBLING CONFLICT. The problem is that kids don't know that fair doesn't mean equal. They use competition and comparison as a standard for their identity. They develop beliefs about themselves based on how they compare to others.

When parents emphasize a child's uniqueness, and teach other children to do the same, then comparison becomes less prevalent and competition reduces. Emphasizing the unique qualities of each child and then treating children differently according to those needs builds an attitude in a family that says, "We're not even trying to be equal, so please don't bring up the idea that you're not getting what your brother is getting."



When kids have a problem about how they're being treated in a home, they need to go to the parents and talk about it without involving the comparison of others. Parents can talk about the needs of that child and only talk about other kids when it means that we look to their unique qualities and ways that the whole family can provide encouragement.

ASSIGNMENT

Have a discussion with your kids about the idea of fairness and equality. That discussion

might best take place around one or more Bible passages giving you opportunity to do some teaching. You might first study these passages and then present them in a fun and interesting way. 1 Corinthians 12:15-20, John 21:20-22, and for advanced discussion Matthew 20:1-16.



A STEP FORWARD

Some children have a keen eye for unfairness in life. That's not necessarily bad, but can get them into trouble when applied the wrong way. With these children it's especially important to provide a lot of dialogue to help them understand what's appropriate and what isn't in family life.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I'm grateful that you don't treat us all equally as your children, but that you dispense your grace to us according to what we need. And, by the way, I need a lot of it so I'm coming to you to ask for an extra measure of your grace as I parent. You know my unique family. You know my unique needs, and I ask that you would give me a special grace that touches me just where I need it. Please also make me a conduit of that grace for my family.

**But to
each one of
us grace has been
given as Christ
apportioned it.**

—Ephesians 4:7

40

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

When children are wrong and need correction, they often must undergo a process of internal acceptance of the wrong and a willingness to move in a new direction. That's heart work. If you're firm against their resistance, children are forced to rethink their ways and readjust their thinking. Be firm and willing to correct a resistant child over and over again to help that child move to another way of responding.

CORRECTION IS VALUABLE

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Recognize the value of correction and use it as a strategic tool for heart change.

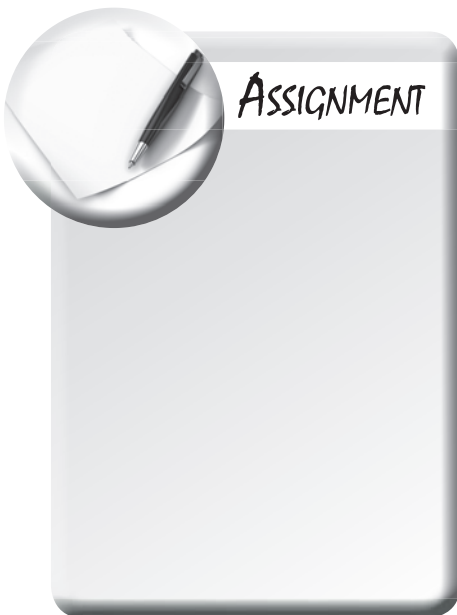
SOMETIMES PARENTS SIMPLY USE CORRECTION AS A MEANS TO EXACT JUSTICE ON THEIR KIDS. Others believe that a consequence is what brings about change. Both of these ideas may be partially true but they are short sighted. In fact, parents who miss the bigger picture often find themselves frustrated with the lack of long term results.

Correction is not only a necessary parenting task. It's a valuable one. Correction done strategically can bring about heart change in a child. You will likely look for techniques and ideas to add to your correction tool box, but keep in mind that your greatest asset is your attitude. If you view correction as an interruption to your life or a violation of your right to a peaceful life, then you'll likely react with anger.

On the other hand, if you recognize correction to be part of a larger strategy to bring about change you'll be able to use it wisely. It's often the correction times that are most effective at helping a child change beliefs and determine a new way of living.

ASSIGNMENT

Sit down with your child (independently if



you have more than one) and ask your child, “What could I do to be more effective when correcting you?” With a younger child, this question may just indicate that you’re willing to grow and be a greater part of the solution. With an older child, this question can lead to significant dialogue about the correction process in your home.



A STEP FORWARD

Everyone in a family is growing, even parents. God sometimes uses children to indicate areas that need adjustment in Mom or Dad. It’s important to have an attitude of humility, recognizing the need to be firm at times but you’ll also want to communicate the idea that you’re willing to make adjustments to your approach if you can achieve the best result. Kids often appreciate humility in their parents and respond better when they know that their parents are growing too.



SOMETHING I’VE LEARNED OR I’M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I'm continually reminded how complex parenting is. Maybe that's because you made each person in my family uniquely, requiring different approaches sometimes. It just reminds me of my continual dependence on you everyday and the need to trust you fully in everything that I do. Please provide the strength, patience, and wisdom to know when and how to correct my kids today. Amen.

**Listen to
advice and
accept discipline,
and at the end you
will be counted
among the wise.**

—Proverbs 19:20

41

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Some parents make the mistake of delegating the spiritual training of children to the church, believing that they're doing their spiritual duty by taking their kids to Sunday school and youth group. The church is a great support, but it can't take the place of the home when it comes to passing on a spiritual heritage. Even if you've chosen to send your children to a Christian school, you're still their primary spiritual trainer.

USE CREATIVITY TO TEACH YOUR KIDS SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Use Creativity to Teach Your Kids Spiritual Truths.

LOOK FOR WAYS TO MAKE BIBLE TIME IN YOUR HOME THE MOST EXCITING FAMILY EXPERIENCE YOU ENJOY. The Bible is a treasure book of stories, teaching, and truth. The process of discovery can be fun, enjoyable, and can bring your family closer together.

Remember that each Bible Story or teaching isn't there simply to provide entertainment. God's Word speaks to us and provides practical insight into how we are to live. Many children today know a lot about the Bible stories or facts about scripture, but do they see the Bible as a tool for God to communicate with us?

As you act out a Bible story or do a science experiment to illustrate an aspect of spirituality, be sure to ask kids what the message is for them? God's Word applies to young children and teenagers alike. The sooner we can get kids connected to that reality the better.

Another way to enhance spirituality in your home is to share with your kids what you're learning from God's Word. By telling kids about the messages God is giving you, they'll see faith modeled in your home. It's especially fun to ask kids what God is teaching them. Those discussions often lead to significant heart work.



ASSIGNMENT

Plan a fun family time around a Bible story or lesson. Read that story or Bible passage to the kids and then do some kind of activity to reinforce the lesson learned. Talk about how that lesson can be applied in your own family and then pray together that God would help you all to follow him.



A STEP FORWARD

Spiritual transparency is part of God's design for parents as they work with their children. If you struggle with spiritual openness, then you'll want to look for ways to get over the discomfort. Spiritual closeness in a family is one of the strongest bonds that will unite you now and well into the future.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for your Spirit who provides a sense of unity with other believers. I want that same sense of unity for my family. Please give me opportunities to share my love for you with my kids. I so want them to know you as I know you. Use me as a vessel of yours to reveal what it means to have an open, transparent, relationship with you. Amen.

**Fathers,
do not
exasperate your
children; instead,
bring them up in
the training and
instruction of
the Lord.**

—Ephesians 6:4

42

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

If you're struggling with emotional intensity in yourself or your children, then every time you see it rising, slow things down, take a break, and resist the temptation to turn up the heat. That's the first step toward managing conflict in a healthy way. Don't allow conflict to escalate into a battle. Stop the intensity with a break. It'll not only help you stay calm, but it'll help your children develop some maturity in dealing with their emotions and with conflict.

WHEN THINGS GET INTENSE, REQUIRE A BREAK

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Do the hard work to develop a break technique in your family.

TAKING A BREAK IS NOT EASY FOR PARENTS OR FOR KIDS BECAUSE IT'S COUNTER INTUITIVE. That means that it's not natural to take a break because you don't feel like pulling back. Both children and parents can develop a tendency to push forward with their emotion when they feel intense.

The break teaches children that pulling back is not optional. It's the only choice when you feel intense. The sooner kids learn it the more effective they'll be at handling things such as disappointment, conflict, or just feeling upset. The break is really an adult skill but many adults don't yet use it adequately.

When parents are firm, require a break, and limit their own intensity in the process, kids start to learn that it's an easier way to get through an upsetting experience effectively. After all, kids who don't respond to the break end up with consequences, more time in the correction process, or a harder experience because they've lost control. Implementing a break is actually an easier way to address emotional challenges in family life, but it takes some time to teach it in order for it to become an effective part of your routine.

ASSIGNMENT

Talk about the break with your child and try to imagine the objections that will challenge its use. You might even use the break with young children at a non-discipline time. Use the break in small discipline times at first, when emotions aren't as intense. Realize that it may take some time for your child to catch



the benefit the break provides. Hang in there during that resistance.



A STEP FORWARD

Rarely does a child appreciate the benefits that a break provides, at least at first. Most kids resist with more emotion to the break than they do to the original offense or problem. That's usually a further indicator that a break is necessary and important in that child's life. Your work in this area will provide you and your child with a tremendous amount of peace eventually, but it will

likely require a considerable amount of work to get it operational in your home.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, please keep me calm on the inside with your peace. I know that you give me an internal ability to be composed under pressure but I sometimes react in my heart and it comes out in my words or actions. Would you please help me to grow in this area? I want to model a peace under pressure for my family and I'm sure that you are the key to that in my life. Amen.

**Peace
I leave with
you; my peace I
give you. I do not
give to you as the
world gives. Do not
let your hearts be
troubled and do
not be afraid.**

—John 14:27

43

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Isn't it amazing that some children seem to be able to see every factor that went into their current problem except their own part in it? Indeed, some kids have a problem blaming others and not taking responsibility for their part of the problem. In the child's mind, it's always someone else's fault. These children have the ability to see all kinds of reasons why an offense occurs, but can't see how their own actions contributed to it, or at least they don't want to admit it.

CHILDREN WHO PLAY THE BLAME GAME LOSE

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Teach kids to take responsibility for their part of the problem.

SEVERAL PARENTING APPROACHES CAN BE ADJUSTED TO ENCOURAGE KIDS TO THINK RIGHTLY ABOUT THEIR OFFENSES. Parents who tend to ask investigative questions about an offense make the error of encouraging kids to explain their defense. Asking the question, “What did you do wrong?” is often more productive.

The underlying problem in many children is the reluctance to admit fault for various reasons. Sometimes, it's fear of punishment or parental disapproval or the self-condemnation that comes from admitting weakness. Those deeper issues must be met with a bigger approach involving teaching, coaching, and training.

The reality is that admitting fault isn't a sign of weakness but is a sign of strength. The person who responds well to correction learns faster and matures more rapidly. These truths help kids to have the humility and courage to admit fault. It takes time, creativity, and dialogue to help kids catch these ideas and to do better at taking responsibility. Persistence is important from the parent but it's also important to look for different ways to encourage honesty, humility, and courage.



ASSIGNMENT

Do a few activities in your family to encourage humility as an important success principle for life. Everyone can participate providing examples to others of what humility is. You might simply ask, "What is a way you did or will demonstrate humility today?" Or brainstorm ideas of ways people demonstrate humility, and why it's helpful. You might contrast humility with arrogance and describe how they are demonstrated and why people appreciate one and are annoyed by the other.



A STEP FORWARD

Children who blame, lie, or resist taking responsibility have a character weakness. It's not enough to just use parental authority to overpower a child or worse yet, to humiliate a child. Those techniques are counterproductive. It takes courage and confidence to admit fault. Coaching children to rise to the occasion and, at times, requiring that they do so, can be an excellent way to increase confidence levels in that child.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I admit my fault before you. Thank you for allowing me to come to you to confess and to share my heart. I'm grateful that you use my weaknesses to reveal your strength and that you give me you grace to deal with life. Please help me know how to teach humility in my family both through my parenting and also through my example. Amen.

**God
opposes the
proud but shows
favor to the
humble.**

—James 4:6

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

One way to teach children responsibility in the everyday work of family life is to have them report back after completing a task. Many parents give assignments, assuming that their kids are completing the jobs, often resulting in frustration when they later find out that they jobs weren't done, or were only done partway.

HAVE KIDS REPORT BACK

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Require kids to report back after they complete an assigned task.

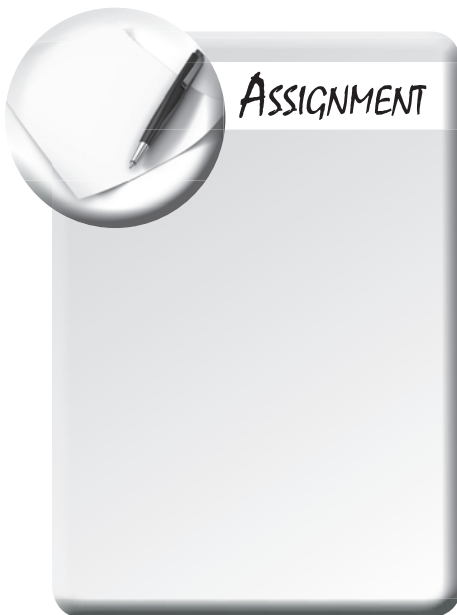
IF YOU'RE TRYING TO INCREASE RESPONSIBILITY IN A CHILD THEN YOU'LL WANT TO LOOK AT THE HEART, NOT JUST THE ACTIONS. Deep inside a responsible child's heart is the uncomfortable feeling when a job is not complete. Children who lack responsibility don't feel uncomfortable or need training to understand and to respond to that discomfort.

One of the ways to strengthen a child's heart in the area of responsibility is to require that the child report back. Not only does accountability increase responsibility but reporting back gives you the opportunity to check the child's work, clarify the expectations, and offer affirmation for a job well done. All of these actions contribute to the growth of responsibility in a child's heart.

Reporting back is just a technique, but an important one for children to learn now. They'll use this skill for the rest of their lives because managers, teachers, coaches, and bosses like it when they get progress reports from those under them.

ASSIGNMENT

Have a meeting with your child and explain the value of reporting back. You're requiring



it now of your child because you're building a life skill. Kids who are responsible end up with the better opportunities in life. Don't just talk about why but also talk about how by describing what you expect when you give an assignment. Then practice. A child who fails to report back doesn't necessarily need a consequence. He needs more practice following instructions and reporting back.



A STEP FORWARD

Building responsibility in a child is strategic for future growth and development. You'll emphasize several components of responsibility throughout family life. You'll work on responsibility in cleanliness, handling one's mouth, dealing with emotions, and seeing things that need to be done and doing them. Reporting back after receiving an instruction is just one of many demonstrations of responsibility and is a great place to start teaching it.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for this day. I've never experienced this day before and I'm not quite sure what it will hold. I need your leadership to guide me through so that I'm not surprised and overreact to situations. I'm learning a lot as a parent and the more I learn, the more I realize that I need your grace every day to be the parent you've called me to be. I pray that today you'd help my words and actions to be just what my child needs to move to the next level in responsibility. Amen.

**Well done,
good and faithful
servant! You have
been faithful with a
few things; I will put
you in charge of
many things.**

—Matthew 25:23

45

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Take time to plan the social component of the mealtime. Save stories from the day, jokes or riddles, and think of questions that get your kids talking. Some parents spend a lot of time preparing a meal but don't prepare at all for the dialogue. That's a mistake in many homes where the conversation deteriorates rather quickly and relational opportunities are missed.

USE MEALTIMES TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Plan relational interaction during mealtimes.

ONE OF THE GREATEST TIMES TO CONNECT WITH KIDS IS WHILE THEY'RE EATING. Of course, some children lack manners, make poor food choices, and act out with silliness, meanness, or inappropriate behavior. So, you may need to work on some discipline with your kids, but it would be better to do that work at other times besides during the meal.

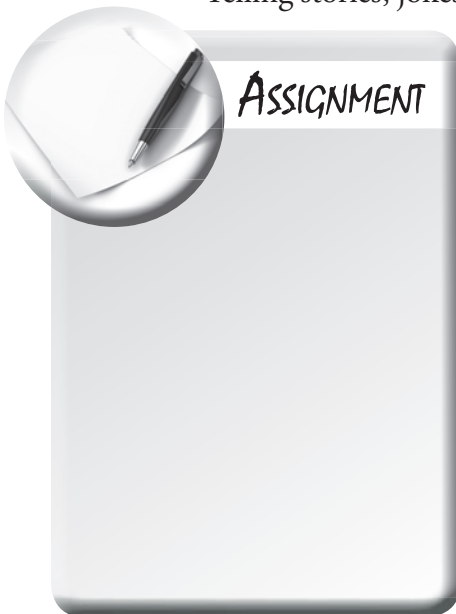
If you see that a child is detracting from the meal because of immaturity, look for ways to practice doing what's right at other times during the day. When it comes to the meal, you may offer reminders but make your primary focus building strong relationships.

Telling stories, jokes, talking about the day or about the Lord's work in your lives all communicate a message, that you enjoy your children and look forward to being with them. Of course, some parents don't have happy thoughts about spending time with children and that's likely an indicator that some of the other chapters in *The Christian Parenting Handbook* would be helpful.

Make mealtimes fun and enjoyable and you'll go a long way to strengthen relationships in family life.

ASSIGNMENT

Plan now for your next family meal. Schedule it and identify some ways to make it fun.



Partner with one or more members of your family to enhance the social dynamic. Watch the fun develop and look for ways to do it again.



A STEP FORWARD

Mealtimes are a challenge. The goal of this lesson is to look past the food part of the meal and rise above the discipline tasks often needed. Both of those are major hindrances to an enjoyable experience. Both often require some work, but doing that work at other times is worth the benefit. You can often measure the health of a family by asking, “How are the mealtimes in your home?” Several things must come together all at the same time. It’s a fast way to identify areas that need a bit of work in family life.

SOMETHING I’VE LEARNED OR I’M WORKING ON



PRAYER

Lord, I know that these kids grow up quickly and then they're out of the house. I've heard people express regrets about their busy lives. I want to be one of those people who builds into my kids now and strengthens the bonds necessary to have a close family. Please help me to use mealtimes in a constructive way. Thank you for the way you draw us together as a family and teach me more as I relate to my kids. Amen.

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

*—Acts
2:46-47*

Children want privileges and often pressure their parents to give them. A strong biblical parenting philosophy will help you withstand undue pressure and will keep privileges in perspective. Be careful about giving privileges too quickly, and when you do give them to your kids, use them to teach responsibility.

PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY GO TOGETHER

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Use privileges strategically to motivate kids to build character.

REMEMBER THAT THE FOCUS OF A HEART-BASED STRATEGY ISN'T ON BEHAVIOR, BUT RATHER ON THE HEART. Character is one of the ways to get to the heart of a child because a character quality is simply a combination of thinking and acting patterns that focus around one particular idea. The heart contains these tendencies and children (and adults) are continually developing new patterns. That's one part of spiritual growth.

Kids sometimes need motivation to move in a particular direction. Privileges can be just the incentive needed to get kids moving along the path. Of course, that means setting up character goals for your kids that they understand in their own language. Once they know what they need to be working on then you'll use a number of strategies to move them along that path.

Be careful to emphasize the heart and character instead of behavior or kids just try to jump through hoops to get what they want. They tend to put on outward actions in order to get the next privilege. Your strategy is to talk about the heart and use your discipline techniques in a way that encourages positive movement toward the goal.

ASSIGNMENT

Identify a privilege your child has or enjoys. How might you tie that more closely to a



growth goal that you're working on? Write down some specifics and then start using your ideas to be more strategic in your training.



A STEP FORWARD

Changes in the way you work with your kids can frustrate them. It's important to explain the changes and help children understand your strategy. Your parenting techniques are not, or shouldn't be, a secret. The best growth takes place when children know what's required and then what to expect when that doesn't take place.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, please give me insight into my child's heart. Help me see what character qualities would be best to emphasize and then give me ideas to know how best to teach them. I want to be used as a vessel in your hands to train and teach my children. But this is complex and I sometimes get lost in the process. Please give me the grace today to see how you're working in our family and to work along with you. Amen.

**being
confident of
this, that he who
began a good work
in you will carry it
on to completion
until the day of
Christ Jesus.**

*—Philippians
1:6*

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Anger works. It quiets children, moves them toward the care when it's time to go, and motivates them to clean their room. But anger and harshness have a downside. They build walls of resistance in children, and over years contribute to distance in relationships.

FIRMNESS DOESN'T REQUIRE HARSHNESS

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Be firm but minimize the emotion.

IT SEEMS THAT SOME PARENTS BELIEVE THAT THEY NEED TO ADD EMOTION TO THEIR LIMITS IN ORDER TO SOMEHOW BOLSTER THEIR WORDS. Or, they've developed such a habit of relying on emotion in dialogue that it's hard to change. But one of the strongest motivators in life is love and you can harness the love that you have for your family to initiate some change in this area.

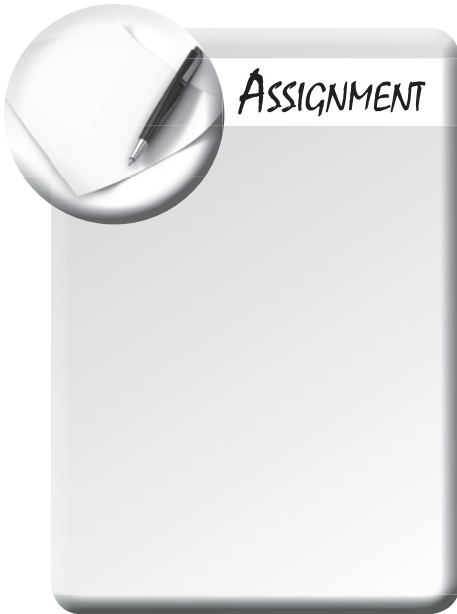
To begin the change process you first need to dedicate your heart to the Lord and ask him to quiet your soul under pressure. You may need to view a reliance on anger as a sin and come before God with a repentant heart. Then, applying God's grace to your emotions may help produce some positive results.

Likely you'll need to develop some new techniques that demonstrate firmness without emotion so that you can hang in there when your child resists. Sometimes that means being quiet and walking away and other times it means adding a consequence. It's interesting to see what happens to children when you remain calm and firm. Many times they don't know quite how to respond. Often change happens more quickly.

Determine to hold firm and reduce the reliance on emotions and you'll be able to strengthen your relationship with your child while holding fast to the limit or instruction you've given.

ASSIGNMENT

Ask yourself why emotions creep into your parenting. The answers may lead you to some specific solutions before the Lord. Sometimes it's a lack of confidence, or a feeling of being mistreated, or a desire to be heard or respected. Those aren't



wrong, but they do give you a starting point for some internal growth for yourself as you continue on in your parenting journey.



A STEP FORWARD

Children learn to rely on cues to know when you're most serious. If the pattern has been to rely on emotional cues, then you'll want to talk about new cues that will replace the old. It might be helpful to say something such as, "I realize I've been doing a lot of yelling. I know you don't like that and I don't like what I see in myself either.

I'd like to make a change." From there, you can dialogue about new ideas for communicating your firmness without the emotional drama that often follows.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, please quiet my heart before you. I know you've called me to peace and I want to be true to that calling in my heart. When I find myself under pressure would you please teach me to trust in you in those moments while I still move forward to solve the problem? I want to reveal your grace in my life and this is an area that is a challenge sometimes for me. Please help me to remain calm today as I continue to serve you in my family. Amen.

**Above
all, my brothers
and sisters, do not
swear – not by
heaven or by earth
or by anything else.
All you need to say
is a simple “Yes”
or “No.”**

—James 5:12

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Attitudes become a problem when negative emotions affect behavior and relationships. It's not wrong to feel bad, but when you act out because of those negative feelings, people get hurt. Parents frequently see their kids' bad attitudes when they give their children instructions they'd rather not follow. Those kids may obey but have a bad attitude in the process.

DISCIPLINE FOR BAD ATTITUDES

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Don't ignore bad attitudes, but view them as an indicator of a heart problem.

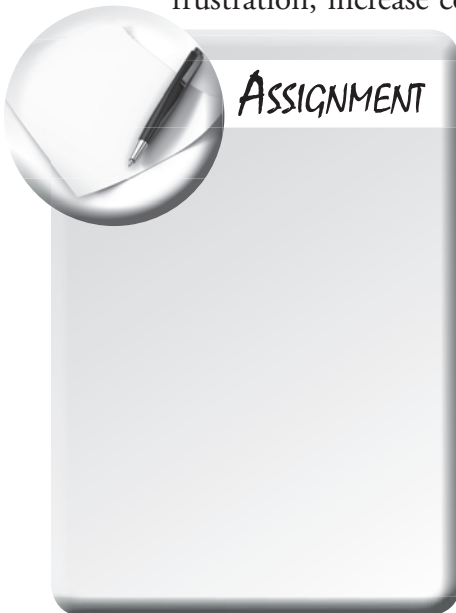
ATTITUDES AREN'T JUST ABOUT BEHAVIOR. They're about emotions too. The child who demonstrates a bad attitude often displays emotions inappropriately. Sometimes it would be better to express the emotion with words in a helpful way, in order to talk about the problem. Other times it would be better just to remain silent and not display the emotion at all.

But moving bad attitudes to good attitudes is more than just being quiet when you feel uncomfortable. It means looking for ways to add positively to the emotional climate in a situation. Sometimes a person with a good attitude can reduce frustration, increase cooperation, or just lift a person's spirit by demonstrating a positive attitude.

Look for ways to teach your child about having a good attitude. You might even partner with your child to bring a good attitude to dinner, to chores, or to your morning routine. When you and just one child work together, it's amazing what happens to others in a family. Good attitudes are often contagious and together you can infect others with God's grace.

ASSIGNMENT

Have a discussion with your kids about attitude in general. Talk about your own attitude



challenges as part of the discussion. Determine as a family to work on attitudes, contributing to the emotional environment of your home. End the discussion by developing a list together of ways to keep attitudes positive. Practice your list over the next few days and add new ideas as family members think of them.



A STEP FORWARD

It's tempting for anyone to mope, pout, or grumble in life. Helping children understand attitude and then teaching them to look for ways to share a positive attitude with others gives them a tool they'll use forever. This is not just a child's task, but when kids grow up seeing good attitudes practiced, they learn how to be change agents with their attitudes.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, I'm grateful that you care about me personally. You know my struggles and challenges in life both externally as well as in my heart. Would you please help me to demonstrate a positive attitude in my home? Help me know how to confront, encourage, and empower my family to develop a culture of positive attitudes. Thank you for all that you do for me. Help me to reflect on your generous grace and to develop an attitude of gratefulness for all you've given me. Amen.

**May
the God
who gives
endurance and
encouragement
give you the same
attitude of mind
toward each other
that Christ Jesus
had, so that with one
mind and one voice
you may glorify
the God and
Father of our
Lord Jesus
Christ.**

*—Romans
15:5-6*

49

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

When you recognize a child's strength in an area of character, take time to demonstrate admiration for it. Appreciation tends to focus on what a child does and is important in family life. Admiration focuses on who the child is and goes straight to the heart. When you spend time admiring a child's strengths, you help form beliefs about self. Those beliefs are important because they form the way a child acts and develops.

GOOD CHARACTER QUALITIES MISUSED

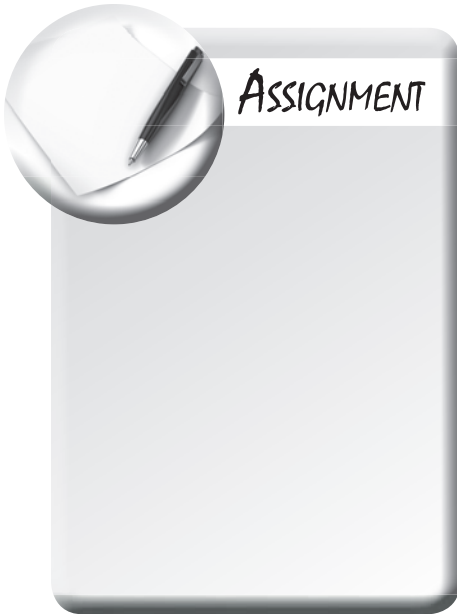
PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Admire strengths while bringing other qualities along to compensate for weaknesses.

ONE ENCOURAGING DIMENSION OF A HEART-BASED APPROACH IS THE POSITIVE FOCUS ON HEART QUALITIES IN A CHILD'S LIFE. Working on building something new instead of stopping something negative makes a lot of sense and helps a negative parent become more positive. Furthermore, the positive approach works faster in a child's life.

The principle in this lesson seeks to identify the positive within a problem. Most negative patterns in a child's life come from a positive heart quality that's misused. The solution has two parts, first to point out that positive quality and admire it, while at the same time setting limits on misuse of that quality by adding a complementary quality as support.

The reality is that every child is, or should be, working on something in life. The child who is critical may have a good eye for detail but needs to work on compassion. The child who is flexible may not easily be upset but needs to work on neatness and organization. Look for ways to discuss with your child the problems and the solutions that frame the picture around character. Kids do much better with that kind of approach.



ASSIGNMENT

Identify one good character quality that may be misused in your child. What is it? How might that character quality be an asset for your child if it were balanced? What quality does your child need to develop to keep a good balance? Next share your findings with your child and together develop suggestions of ways to improve.



A STEP FORWARD

A focus on character helps a parent to move into the role of a coach in a child's life. Anytime a parent can move away from the police officer approach to the coach role, the relationship increases. Helping children grow toward maturity is challenging for kids as well as parents. Whenever possible, it's best to position yourself as a parent to be on the same side as your child. In that way, you can bring hope to the situation, an essential ingredient for change.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, this concept of balance is tricky even in my own life. I know I need to be firm and loving at the same time. I know that I need to be compassionate yet call my children to a higher standard. But those competing desires create a challenging tension inside my heart. I ask that you'd give me wisdom to know which to emphasize at any given time. Please give me sensitivity to what you want to do in my child's life. I want to work where you are working. Amen.

**For if
you
possess these
qualities in
increasing measure,
they will keep you
from being
ineffective and
unproductive in
your knowledge
of our Lord
Jesus Christ.**

—2 Peter 1:8

QUOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN PARENTING HANDBOOK

Grandparents are people. That means they have their own set of strengths and weaknesses. Don't spend a lot of time wishing your parents or in-laws were different. Look for ways to take advantage of the good and minimize the bad. This can only help your kids.

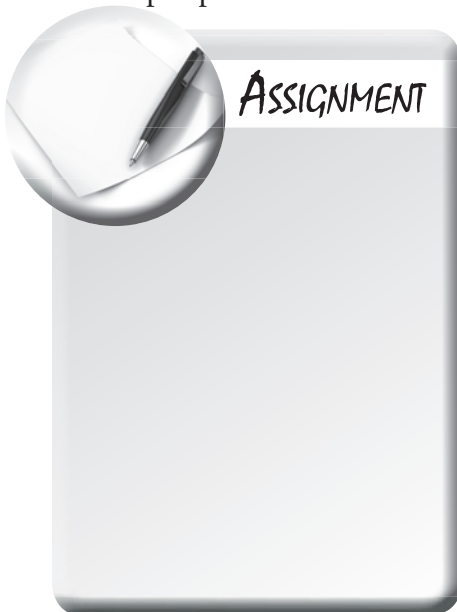
THE VALUE OF GRANDPARENTS

PARENTING PRINCIPLE

Maximize the benefits of grandparents in your child's life.

LOOK FOR WAYS TO USE THE STRENGTHS OF GRANDPARENTS TO BENEFIT YOUR CHILDREN. Plan events, encourage dialogue, and ask parents to contribute to character development in a child's life. Often grandparents can say or do things that have a lasting impact on kids. Your goal is to provide those grandparents with the ideas they need to move forward.

You might share with grandparents the character qualities you're kids are working on. Grandparents can often reinforce those ideas or offer more suggestions or creative thoughts that help move things along. Grandparents can be listening ears for kids, providing another source of input and counsel. They can offer a different perspective on situations that brings about balance or direction.



Every grandparent is different. You might find it harder to incorporate the strengths of some more than others. And, of course, you may have to set limits on some grandparents because of a significant weakness or fault. Those are the realities of living in a broken world where we all experience pain and challenges. Look for ways to connect grandparents and to their grandchildren to take advantage of the benefits for your kids.

ASSIGNMENT

Write down a couple of ways that you could use parents or in-laws more effectively in your

family. Make a point to encourage them and thank them for their care and support. Point out the strengths of grandparents to your kids.



A STEP FORWARD

Kids need other leaders and authorities in their lives in order to grow and develop effectively. Grandparents may play a significant role in that, but you might also want to adopt a grandparent at church or as a friend. Encourage your children to learn from the older generation and experience a sense of connectedness with people who are different. It's amazing what impact those relationships have on kids.



SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED OR I'M WORKING ON

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for the privilege I have to learn from others who are in a previous generation. I'm grateful for the people you've brought into my life. Please help me to find the right kind of people to influence my children to follow you and to live for you. Thank you for placing me in a community with other believers where I too can learn and grow. Amen.

**I am
reminded of
your sincere faith,
which first lived in
your grandmother
Lois and in your
mother Eunice
and, I am
persuaded, now
lives in you also.**

—2 Timothy 1:5

CONCLUSION

As you finish this course, you've probably gained some confidence in what God wants you to do. Or, you feel like there's so much to do that it's hard to keep up. Both are healthy responses to the challenging task of raising a family. In fact, both confidence and humility will keep you growing and moving on the right path.

Parenting is a way to serve God. Your service in your family is a demonstration of your love for both God and your family. It's interesting that God allows people to be part of his plan to bless others. In fact, God gives people like us the privilege of being conduits of his grace.

As you pray each day, ask yourself how God might want to use you today to share his grace in your home. It may be by your firmness with a no answer, or by correcting or challenging a perpetual problem with a coaching attitude. And it may be by showing some extra love by listening or by asking an insightful question that draws you into a heart felt conversation with your child.

Whatever you do, view yourself as a servant of God, ready to listen and obey him as you do the daily work as a mom or dad in your home. As you have opportunity, you might want to encourage another parent with the things you're learning. Parenting can be a lonely task and many feel like others just don't understand. You might be able to offer some suggestions that bring a ray of hope that's needed at a sensitive time.

God is at work and wants to use you in your home and in strategic ways to help others. Be on the lookout for what he wants you to do. Be ready to serve him each day. Pray regularly that God will give you direction and affirmation of his will. And never forget that doing the work of parenting is secondary to being the parent that God wants you to be.

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The family
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