

CRAIG CASTER

PARENTING
IS A MINISTRY
WORKBOOK

Family Discipleship Ministries
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Dear Parents,

As a father of three children, a former youth pastor and a family counselor, I am absolutely convinced that God's Word is a complete manual for raising children. I have witnessed within my own family and hundreds of others how God's Word brings direction and understanding to both parents and their children.

Parenting Is A Ministry will open your eyes to parenting principles and biblical truths that you may never have considered, give you clarity to God's will and purpose in parenting *His* children, and a clear game plan to raise your children to maturity.

I encourage you to seek the Lord and ask Him to open your heart to receive from Him. Be willing to accept His loving correction, be challenged to make changes in areas that He reveals and, above all, be comforted that God loves you and your children and has the power to transform your home. I know that God will bless you as you believe and follow His Word.

Your Fellow Servant,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig Caster".

Pastor Craig Caster
Founder/Director

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

1 Thessalonians 2:13





About the Author

Pastor Craig Caster is the Founder and Director of Family Discipleship Ministries. In early 1992 Craig began to experience a burden for families from the Lord. At this point in his life Craig was the Vice President of a large developing company in San Diego, California and had spent 8 years as a lay minister leading a marriage ministry as well as a youth ministry. During that year the Lord began to reveal the vision for this ministry and in January 1993, Craig left his career for full-time ministry. In 1994 Family Discipleship Ministries became a non-profit ministry in San Diego, California.

Craig has gained a reputation among many evangelical churches as a trusted resource for family counseling, seminars, and family ministry resources. He has developed biblically based marriage and parenting tools and taught thousands through seminars hosted in churches around the country and abroad. These biblical seminars have been embraced by the county of San Diego, and meet the requirement for parents under court order to attend parenting classes. Craig has served on several school and community based organizations. In 1997 Craig was asked by the San Diego City Attorney's Office to help design their *Parenting Project*, an early intervention program for troubled teens, also providing support, and resources for parents, in collaboration with the police department, juvenile probation, and the county courts.

In addition, under Craig's leadership, Family Discipleship Ministries developed and implemented a youth mentoring ministry for children from single-parent families, foster care, and group homes with over 400 graduates between 1994 and 2000. Over the past 20 years Craig has worked with both children and parents as a youth pastor, marriage counselor, teacher, and speaker.

Craig has been married since 1980. He and his wife are the parents of three children, Nicholas, Justin, and Katelyn.

About Family Discipleship Ministries

Family Discipleship Ministries is a non-profit ministry that was established in 1994, under the Founder and Director Pastor Craig Caster. The main purpose of this ministry is to support, educate, and train the body of Christ to more effectively minister to families. To accomplish this goal we offer family counseling, teaching seminars on marriage and parenting, spiritual discipleship, church leadership training, and counseling training. Family Discipleship Ministries also offers numerous materials in video and audio format, workbooks, paperback, and online resources in English as well as several other languages.

The vision of Family Discipleship Ministries is to reach out to Christian churches, enabling them to disciple their congregations in marriage and parenting. To date thousands of parents throughout the US and abroad have completed our biblical marriage and parenting classes hosted in churches as well as through our free online classes.

Parenting is a Ministry

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SESSION ONE

God's Purposes for Parents

Parenting is a Ministry
God's Purposes for Parents
Homework

1. Write out in your own words how seeing your role as a minister changes your perspective as a parent (see page 1).

2. How does being a minister affect you as a father and mother (if married) when it comes to how to handle the raising of your children (see page 1)?

3. What are God's purposes for parents? Turn to page 2 for help with your answer.

- 1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

4. Make a list of non-glorifying behaviors that God is revealing in you through the trials and/or difficulties in raising your children. Example: impatience, resentment, etc.

If married, discuss these things as a couple, then together take them to the Lord. Ask for His forgiveness and for the ability to take responsibility every time these things are manifested through you. Ask for the faith to trust *His* way in bringing about your transformation. **Remember:** there is no growth or transformation taking place if you do not ask for forgiveness...every time.

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Session Two

A Strong Foundation

How to Develop Intimacy with God Through Daily Devotions

HOMEWORK

- **Intimacy** – *Marked by very close association, contact, or friendship developing through long association; very familiar; suggesting informal warmth or privacy; of a very personal nature.*
1. Choose the best time of day (morning or evening) to commit to setting aside devotional time. Don't set yourself up for discouragement by setting a goal that you will not be able to keep. Start small, and then add time as you grow. Begin with 15 minutes.
 2. Choose a book of the Bible. Read one chapter, or less if it is a long chapter or verses that you want to ponder. In addition, you may also want to read a daily devotional. See suggestions listed below.
 3. Pray. Specifically pray over the truths you have read, asking God to speak to you about how you can obey; what you should do or what you should change in your life in order to obey.
 4. Spend a few minutes in quiet listening. This may be uncomfortable for you at first. Living in a noise-filled world, most of us are not accustomed to sitting quietly. Persevere and God will be faithful to speak to you. Remember that the Holy Spirit is dwelling in your heart and mind and can minister to you in your thoughts!
 5. Journal. Write out what these verses mean to you.
- **Journal** – *A record of experiences, ideas, or reflections kept regularly for private use.*
6. Pray. Use the following to help you pray effectively:

Adoration – Worship and praise God
Confession – Confess and repent of any known sins
Thanksgiving – Expressing gratitude for God's blessings in your life
Supplication – Humbly make requests for your needs and the needs of others
 7. Pray that God will help you to know and acknowledge His presence throughout your day.

Suggested Devotionals

Biblical Principles for a Strong Foundation, by Craig Caster
Daily Experience with God, by Andrew Murray
Drawing Near: Daily Readings for a Deeper Faith, by John F. MacArthur
Every Day with Jesus: First Steps with New Believers, by Greg Laurie
Experiencing God, by Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King
Meet the Bible: A Panorama of God's Word..., by Philip Yancey and Brenda Quinn
My Utmost for His Highest, by Oswald Chambers
On the Other Side of the Garden, by Virginia Ruth Fugate (married women)
Streams in the Desert, by Mrs. Charles E. Cowman
The One Year Book of Psalms, by William J. Peterson and Randy Petersen
The Power of a Praying Wife, by Stormie Omartian (married women)

Parent's Commitment To Put Jesus Christ First In Your Life HOMEWORK

Perhaps you have struggled in some areas of parenting and have come to realize that your struggles are a result of a weak or inconsistent spiritual life. God promises to bless, encourage, and strengthen us as we submit to His lordship in our life.

"The LORD will give strength to His people; the LORD will bless His people with peace." Psalm 29:11

Write a prayer to the Lord, committing to put Him first in your life and asking Him to help you parent the *gifts* (children) He has given you.

Perhaps you have never surrendered your life to Christ. Know that God loves you and has provided the way for you to have a relationship with Him. You must simply,

1. Recognize and admit you are a sinner.

Romans 3:23 *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

Romans 6:23 *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

2. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins and that He is the only way for sinners to be forgiven and reconciled to God.

John 14:6 *"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*

Acts 4:12 *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

3. Confess your sins to Jesus and repent (be sorry), asking Him to forgive you.

Acts 3:19 *"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."*

Romans 10:9 *"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."*

4. Ask Jesus to come into your heart and receive Him as your Savior and Lord.

John 1:12 *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name."*

Repeat the following prayer:

"Lord Jesus, I admit that I am a sinner. I am sorry for my sin. Thank you for dying on the cross for me and paying the price for my sin. Please come into my heart. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and help me to be your disciple. Thank you for forgiving me and coming into my life. Thank you that I am now a child of God and will one day follow you to heaven." Amen

A Personal Inspection of Your Foundation

HOMEWORK

Luke 6:46-49

(Grade yourself, A, B, C, D, or F)

1. **"...comes to Me..."** – To receive Christ

Have you come to Him and received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?

Yes No

If you have not received Christ, but would like to, the Parent's Commitment worksheet will assist you in making your commitment.

2. **"...hears My sayings..."** – To abide in Christ

My prayer and devotional life - A B C D F

How is your prayer life? Is it growing and a daily part of your life? Do words like intimate, worship, listening, or relationship describe your prayer life? Do you, as a husband and wife, pray together daily? Do you pray with your children daily?

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

How often do you spend time reading the Word of God? Do you spend time meditating over what you read in your devotional time?

"...when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples." Mark 4:34

"Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15

3. **"...does them..."** – To obey Christ

My finances - A B C D F

Do you trust God with your finances? Do you give tithes regularly?

"Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase. So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine." Proverbs 3:9-10

My priorities - A B C D F

How are your priorities with God, spouse, children, work, church, leisure time, and fellowship? Are they in the proper order and does your family agree?

"Let all things be done decently and in order." 1 Corinthians 14:40

Read 1 Timothy 3:1-13. How does God prioritize your family in these Scriptures?

My practices - A B C D F

Are you practicing godly principles daily in your own home? Are you glorifying Jesus Christ before your children and family? Is His fruit evident in your life?

"Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Galatians 5:22-23

Parenting is a Ministry
A Strong Foundation
Homework

1. On pages 5 and 6 “*A Strong Foundation*” we reviewed Deuteronomy 6:1-6 and Luke 6:46-49. In your own words, briefly summarize what these verses mean.

Deuteronomy 6:1-6

Luke 6:46-49

2. What are the ingredients of a strong foundation? See page 6 for your answers.

1) _____ - _____

2) _____ - _____

3) _____ - _____

3. Review the Scriptures on page 8 that discuss why suffering is part of our journey as a parent: 1 Peter 4:16, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Psalm 127:1, and 2 Peter 1:1-4. Write out your prayer to the Lord and ask Him to help you to accept His plan in these difficult times. Also write out your commitment to look to Him daily for the grace to love and serve your children according to His will.

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Session Three

Loving Communication

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

Insisting that your children and family do only what you want to do.

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

Galatians 5:13 *"...through love serve one another."*

8. Love does not think evil.

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

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

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

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

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

9. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness.

Telling our *children "I told you so, you deserve what you got,"* when they fall in sin or experience consequences from their sin.

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

10. Not rejoicing in the truth.

Failing to praise our children for their good deeds.

Romans 12:9 *"Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good."*

3 John 4 *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."*

HOMEWORK

EFFECTIVE LISTENING SELF-EVALUATION

Complete the *Effective Listening Self-Evaluation* to help you become more aware of your listening habits. Answer each question thoughtfully and honestly.

Communicating Knowledge and Attitudes

#	Do You...	Most of the Time	Frequently	Occasionally	Almost Never
1	...tune-out your child when you don't agree with them or don't want to hear?				
2	...concentrate on what is being said even if you are not really interested?				
3	...assume you know what your child is going to say and stop listening?				
4	...repeat in your own words what your child has just said?				
5	...listen to your child's viewpoint, even if it differs from yours?				
6	...remain open to learning something from them, even if it seems insignificant?				
7	...find out what words mean when they are used in ways not familiar to you?				
8	...form a rebuttal in your head while your child is still talking?				
9	...give the appearance of listening when you are not?				
10	...daydream while your child is talking?				
11	...listen for main ideas, not just facts?				
12	...recognize that words don't always mean the same thing to different people?				
13	...listen to only what you want to hear, blotting out your child's whole message?				
14	...look at your child when they are speaking?				
15	...concentrate on your child's meaning rather than how he or she looks?				
16	...know which words and phrases you tend to respond to emotionally?				
17	...think about what you want to accomplish with your communication?				

Communicating Knowledge and Attitudes

#	Do You...	Most of the Time	Frequently	Occasionally	Almost Never
18	...plan the best time to say what you want to say?				
19	...think about how the other person might react to what you say?				
20	...consider the best way to communicate (written, spoken, and/or the timing)?				
21	...always care about your child's emotional condition when speaking to them (if they are stressed, sad, worried, hostile, disinterested, rushed, angry, etc.)?				
22	...adjust your communication to each child's personality?				
23	...think, " <i>I assumed he or she would know that?</i> " Assuming that your child knows and understands what you are communicating and/or communicated to them?				
24	...allow your child to respectfully vent negative feelings toward you without becoming defensive?				
25	...regularly make efforts to increase your listening efficiency?				
26	...take notes when necessary to help you remember?				
27	...listen closely without being distracted by surroundings?				
28	...listen to your child without judging or criticizing?				
29	...restate instructions and messages to be sure you understand correctly?				
30	...come in with a statement about what you believe your child is feeling?				

HOMEWORK

Effective Listening Self-Evaluation Scoring Index

Circle the number that represents the category you checked on each item of the
Effective Listening Self-Evaluation.

#	Most of the Time	Frequently	Occasionally	Almost Never
1	1	2	3	4
2	4	3	2	1
3	1	2	3	4
4	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1
6	4	3	2	1
7	4	3	2	1
8	1	2	3	4
9	1	2	3	4
10	1	2	3	4
11	4	3	2	1
12	4	3	2	1
13	1	2	3	4
14	4	3	2	1
15	4	3	2	1
16	4	3	2	1
17	4	3	2	1
18	4	3	2	1
19	4	3	2	1
20	4	3	2	1
21	4	3	2	1
22	4	3	2	1
23	1	2	3	4
24	4	3	2	1
25	4	3	2	1
26	4	3	2	1
27	4	3	2	1
28	4	3	2	1
29	4	3	2	1
30	4	3	2	1
Total				

GRAND TOTAL _____

110-120: Excellent Listener _____

99-109: Above Average Listener _____

88-98: Average Listener _____

77-87: Fair Listener _____

<77: Poor to Very Poor Listener _____

HOMEWORK

Improve Your Loving Communication Habits

(If married, review and discuss as a couple)

After completing the *Effective Listening Self-Evaluation* and totaling your score, write out the areas you need to change. Review and discuss as a couple, if married. Then review *What Love Is and Is Not* from pages 14-17 of your workbook and write out, by priority, any unbiblical communication habits you have been practicing in your home that you need God's strength to change.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

If you believe that you have not been demonstrating loving communication to your children (or a particular child), I strongly recommend that you follow the steps below to reconciliation.

- 1) Confess this to the Lord and ask Him to forgive you for not communicating love to *His* child/children.

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

- 2) Ask God to fill your heart with renewed love for your child/children.

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

- 3) Go to your child/children and make an age-appropriate confession. For example, *"I love you, but I know that I have not been showing you that love with my words. I have been very impatient (unkind, etc.) and I need to apologize. Please forgive me. I love you and I am so glad to be your mom/dad."*

- 4) Pray with your child.

Write out a prayer of commitment to seek the Lord to empower you to change in these areas and to become the parent to your child that God desires you to be.

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Session Four

Loving Communication

Our Children's Uniqueness

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

- **Train up** (original Hebrew form) – *To dedicate or set aside for divine service.*
- **In the way he should go** (from a Hebrew idiom) - *According to the demands of his/her personality, conduct, or stage of life.*

God is the creator of the soul, the mind, will and emotions; our personalities.

Jeremiah 38:16 *"...As the LORD lives, who made our very souls..."*

There is a time and a season for all things.

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

Common Reasons We Fail To Love

1. Unforgiveness

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

Forgiveness does not mean:

- That the offender agrees with you.
- That the offender asks for your forgiveness.
- That the offender accepts your forgiveness.
- That the relationship has to be or will be restored.

2. The Set Up – (Satanic attack on our minds and our thoughts)

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"*

- Lies (*John 8:44*)
- Condemnation/accusations against others or ourselves (*Revelation 12:9,10*)
- Temptations to sin (*Matthew 4:3*)

Parenting is a Ministry
Parent Discussion Homework
(If married, complete and discuss as a couple)

1. Take some time to discuss the habit of facial expressions and/or angry outbursts that need to change.

- Think of when they normally occur (for example, when you come home from work, during or after disciplining your child, when your spouse doesn't support or agree with you, etc.) At what times or during what circumstances do these sinful unloving things happen?

- Is there a particular child who brings out the worst in you? Write your response below.

2. As a couple, what practical things can you do to help each other during these times?

3. Review *Common Reasons We Fail to Love* (Pages 23-24) and discuss. Which ones apply to you?

4. If the Lord has revealed to you that unforgiveness is an issue, turn to pages 27-30 in this session of the workbook for *The Biblical Principles of Forgiveness and Reconciliation*. Review these principles and ask the Lord to help you follow through with forgiving others. This may include your own parents, children, or spouse.

5. Take some time and review *Ways to Tell Your Child "I Love You" Without Saying the Words* on page 26. Circle the ones you are going to begin doing on a regular basis. Commit these things to prayer. Ask the Lord to help you follow through with your commitment.

Ways to Tell Your Child “I Love You” Without Saying the Words

HOMEWORK

(Review and discuss as a couple, if married)

1. Attend their sports events, music performance, school plays, etc.
2. Find opportunities to trust your child by granting him/her a new area of responsibility.
3. Have a family picnic on a Sunday afternoon.
4. Walk in the rain and jump puddles together.
5. Listen to your child with all your attention.
6. Sit down together and watch your child’s favorite television show.
7. Skip rocks together on a lake, pond, or river.
8. Say, “*I’m proud of you.*”
9. After your teenager comes in from an outing, have popcorn together by the fireplace.
10. Tell your child about the things that you appreciate most about your own parents.
11. Have a family water-balloon fight (without you as the prime target).
12. Take an evening walk together.
13. Let your child *catch you* bragging about them to a friend.
14. Hug your child *just because*.
15. Postpone an appointment and, instead, do something your child enjoys doing.
16. Surprise your child by giving them a day off from school and spend the day together.
17. Tell your daughter that she is beautiful.
18. Tell your son that he is handsome.
19. Give your child grace when he/she has made a mistake.
20. Pray with your child everyday!
21. Seize appropriate opportunities to ask your child for his/her opinion.
22. Accept your child’s unique personality traits.
23. Write a note expressing your love for them.
24. Bake or buy their favorite cookies.
25. Make popcorn and enjoy an old movie together.
26. Take them out to a restaurant for breakfast or dinner.
27. Take up a hobby that *they* particularly like to do.
28. Start a new hobby together.

The Biblical Principles of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

(Review and discuss as a couple, if married)

The word *forgive* means literally, *to give away*. When a debt is forgiven, the rights to payment are *given away*. If someone injures me and I forgive him or her, I *give away* the freedom to continue being angry and resentful towards the one who wronged me. I absorb the loss myself. The word *pardon* is derived from the Latin word, *perdonare*, meaning to *grant freely*. True forgiveness is undeserved, unmerited, and free. It is not *just* or *fair*. In the Scriptures, to *forget* means, *to let go from one's power*.

∞ The Cost of UnForgiveness

When we refuse to grant forgiveness, choosing rather to maintain our *right* to demand payment for wrongs done to us, we must be willing to absorb the cost incurred by that choice. Forgiveness is free, however unforgiveness carries with it a costly price tag. Unwillingness to forgive produces *resentment*. Resentment means, *to feel again*. Resentment clings to the past, reliving it over and over. Resentment, like *picking a scab*, prohibits our wounds from healing.

In Hebrews 12:15 we learn that bitterness, like a deep root, takes a firm hold in the human heart, then grows, and produces *fruit*. However, rather than nourish others, this fruit is bitter, causes trouble, and defiles others.

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

Most of us do not readily admit that we have been harboring unforgiveness. However, Ephesians 4:31 teaches that there is undeniable evidence in an individual's life that the bitter tree of resentment is growing within their heart.

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." Ephesians 4:31

Wrath – An outburst of a strong, vengeful anger or indignation, seeking retribution.

Anger – A state of mind marked by fretfulness and grief.

Evil speaking – Unkind words, verbal abuse against someone, slander, wounding someone's reputation by evil reports, backbiting, insult and defamation.

Malice – Hateful feelings that we nurture in our hearts. A desire to see another suffer.

"Fruits" of Unforgiveness

- Pride
- Health problems
- Self-centered
- Self-righteous
- Self-pity
- Emotional disturbances
- Judgmental & critical of others
- Anxiety, tension & stress
- Lack of trust in relationships
- Lack of peace
- Thinking you are superior to others
- Ultra-sensitive & easily offended
- Absence of peace & joy
- Eating Disorders
- Broken fellowship with Jesus

☪ *Why Forgive?*

Besides the before mentioned devastation that results from unforgiveness, we are indebted to forgive because:

1. God commands it!

Obedience to the Father is not optional. If we pick and choose when we will and will not obey God's commands, we will live unfruitful, ineffective, and spiritually barren lives.

"But love your enemies, and do good...and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." Luke 6:35-36

2. In forgiving, we resemble Jesus, and bear the family likeness.

The term *Christian* means *little Christ*. As Christians, we are called to carry the name of Christ to a lost world. We must be willing to bear His image; to be like Him. Christ demonstrated forgiveness. He came to this earth to bring forgiveness to the guilty. He gave the commission to the church to continue proclaiming forgiveness. We must, if we are to rightly bear His name, forgive those who have offended us!

"...the one who says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same manner as He walked."
1 John 2:6

3. It is the only means of breaking the cycle of blame and pain.

Forgiveness offers the way out! It does not settle all questions of blame and fairness, often evading those questions altogether. It does allow a relationship to start over, to begin anew.

This truth is demonstrated in the life of Joseph in Genesis chapters 37-45. Though he was mistreated, betrayed, abandoned by his brothers, and sold into slavery, he refused to allow the root of bitterness to take hold of his life. Shortly before being reunited with his brothers, he testified of the healing work that God had done in his life during the years of separation, as demonstrated in the naming of his sons. In Genesis 41:51-52 we read:

"Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my trouble in all my father's household."

"He named the second Ephraim, "For," he said, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction..."

To *forget* in this sense does not mean to cease to remember, but *to let go*, to cease to let the memory of hurtful things control your present life. Joseph's *fruitfulness* was directly related to his *forgetfulness*. Remember that resentment means *to feel again*. Joseph chose to trust God with his past. Unforgiveness imprisons us to the past and locks out all potential for a fruitful life.

During Joseph's years alone in Egypt, he allowed God to heal his heart, which had been broken by his own brothers. Later, when given the opportunity, Joseph extended love, forgiveness, and grace to his brothers. Joseph speaks to his brothers in Genesis 45:5, 7, & 15.

"Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life...and to keep you alive by a great deliverance...He kissed all his brothers and wept on them, and afterward his brothers talked with him."

There was no blaming, no explanations demanded, only the voice of mercy and forgiveness. The way was cleared for Joseph and his brothers to be reunited and begin a new relationship.

4. Forgiveness loosens the stranglehold of guilt in the offender.

Joseph's brothers would have carried their grief to their graves if he had not extended forgiveness to them. Forgiveness, undeserved and unearned, can cut the cords and let the oppressive burden of guilt roll away.

"...in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2:7

If Jesus had not extended kindness to sinners, we would remain in the stranglehold of guilt. He made the first move toward us that made it possible for us to be reconciled to Him.

∞ Reconciliation

To *reconcile* is to restore to friendship or harmony, or to settle or resolve differences. It is the doing away of an enmity, the bridging over of a quarrel. Reconciliation implies that the parties being reconciled were formerly hostile to one another.

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."
Ephesians 4:31-32

To be reconciled, the Scripture above simply instructs us to *"Let all bitterness... be put away from you... be kind... tenderhearted, forgiving..."* But *how* do we let bitterness be put away? *How* can we change our own feelings about a wrong done? *How* do we forgive?

As an act of the will, we must

Confess our unforgiving spirit to God; ask Him to forgive us and to fill our heart with His love (1 John 1:9-10).

If possible, go to those we have wronged, share God's love and forgiveness with them, humbly make confession, and ask for their forgiveness (Matthew 5:22-24).

Spend time daily with the Lord in His Word and in prayer (Matthew 6:33).

Ponder the meaning of the cross and the sacrifice Jesus made for your sins (Titus 3:3-5).

Ask the Holy Spirit to generate His love within your heart and give you the strength to obey and forgive others (Romans 5:5).

*"Forgiveness is not an emotion...
Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function
regardless of the temperature of the heart."
Corrie ten Boom*

*"Whenever I see myself before God and
realize something of what my blessed Lord
has done for me at Calvary, I am ready to
forgive anybody anything, I cannot withhold
it. I do not even want to withhold it."
Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

*"The degree to which I am able and willing to forgive
others is a clear indication of the extent to which I have
personally experienced God my Father's forgiveness for me."
Phillip Keller*

Six of the most powerful words
in the English language,
"I was wrong. Please forgive me."

It is awfully hard to forgive. It is harder not to forgive. If we do not forgive, we deny what Jesus has done for us on the cross. Our experience of God's forgiveness is directly related to our ability to forgive. A readiness to forgive others is part of the indication that we have truly repented and received God's forgiveness. A broken heart toward God cannot be a hard heart toward others.

Pride and fear keep us from forgiveness and reconciliation. Refusing to give in, or be broken, insisting on our rights, and defending ourselves are all indications that our selfish pride is ruling our life, rather than the Lord. If fears of *what-ifs* are consuming and controlling you, you need to pray for the faith to trust and obey God. Enemies are very expensive to keep. Matthew 18:21-35 warns that an unforgiving spirit will put us in an emotional prison.

"The first and often the only person to be healed by forgiveness is the person who does the forgiving... When we genuinely forgive, we set a prisoner free and then discover that the prisoner we set free was us."
Lewis Smedes

You can go to our website at www.parentingministry.org to download a 13 page Workbook that may help you or someone you know further in this area.

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Session Five

God's Management Style

Colossians 3:18 "...as fitting in the Lord."

A wife is to submit to her husband's leadership unless his leadership is in conflict with specific Scriptural commands.

What if you have a blended family or the husband is not a believer?

1 Peter 3:1-2 "Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear."

- **Submission** – A voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility and carrying a burden.

How Do You Know If There Is A Problem With Your Management Style?

Read and ponder the following questions. The purpose of this exercise is **not** to find fault in your spouse, but to allow God to speak to **you** about your own weaknesses. Be aware that responding with resentment or pride will hinder you from yielding to the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

1. **Dad**, when your children are in your presence, do you discipline them?
 Yes No Sometimes
2. **Mom**, do you consult your husband for input on all aspects of discipline?
 Yes No Sometimes
3. **Dad**, do you listen to your wife's input on the emotional state of your children?
 Yes No Sometimes
4. **Mom**, do you keep information from your husband, not informing him on everything regarding the children? Yes No Sometimes
5. **Dad**, when mom says 'no' and the kids come to you, do you always consult with your wife before responding? Yes No Sometimes
6. **Mom**, do you find yourself arguing with your children or teen, defending yourself and why you made a particular rule or disciplinary decision? Yes No Sometimes
7. **Parents**, have you sat down together and agreed on the rules and disciplines you will use with your children? Yes No
8. **Parents**, do you disagree in front of your children over rules or discipline issues?
 Yes No Sometimes

Answers should be : 1.Yes 2.Yes 3.Yes 4.No 5.Yes 6.No 7.Yes 8.No

The Biblical View of Leadership

A Father is one who serves, manages, and teaches.

1. A Servant Priest

Ephesians 5:25, 26 *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her. That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.”*

Job 1:5 *“So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, “It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Thus Job did regularly.”*

2. A Teacher and Manager

Teacher

Ephesians 6:4 *“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”*

He is to _____ them.

Manager

1 Timothy 3:4 *“...one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence”.*

- To rule is to _____.
- He sees that his children are to _____.
- He is the main *disciplinarian*.

Today in most homes, the mothers are setting the rules and issuing the discipline.

Moms are missing opportunities to nurture.

In single-parent homes, the parent, with God's power, fulfills both roles.

Parenting is a Ministry
Parent Discussion Homework
(If married, complete and discuss as a couple)

Remember when we read God's Word, it reveals our hearts, our lack of understanding, and our selfishness. God has used this time in your life to bring these truths and understanding to you. He did not reveal these truths to you to discourage you or to cause you to become hopeless, angry, or resentful but to show you His love for you and His will for you as a parent. You may want to use this time to ask for forgiveness for not following God's order in the home; either not leading as a husband, or not submitting as a wife. Trust the Lord and He will bless you and heal you.

1. Review Pages 31-34 in the workbook.
2. What did you learn about God's order in the family?

3. Go back over the *Management Style* questions on page 33 (1-8). Were your answers to those questions the same as your spouses? Yes No If no, why do you think you see it differently?

4. Review and pray about *The Biblical Roles of the Mother and Father* found on pages 36 – 40 of Session 5 in the workbook. Are there areas that the Lord has revealed to you that need to change? Write them below.

5. Now take some time and discuss them with your spouse. If one of you is feeling overwhelmed or insecure in making these changes, make sure you are willing to be patient with each other and take these concerns daily to the Lord in prayer together.

Biblical Roles of the Responsible Father

HOMEWORK

1 Thessalonians 2:9-11

(Review and discuss as a couple, if married)

The responsible father works to support his family.

"...our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you." V. 9

God's Word is not suggesting that fathers work to the point of neglecting their families, but rather to work responsibly, that the family would not be burdened financially. The responsible father is instructed to maintain a job in order to care for the needs of his family while not neglecting the priorities of a husband and father.

*"...for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children."
-2 Corinthians 12:14*

The responsible father is a servant-priest over his family.

*"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word."
Ephesians 5:25-26*

Jesus is the High Priest over the church; likewise men are the priests over their homes. See Hebrews 5:10. A priest has the authority to perform the sacred rites or duties of a godly or religious institution. When fathers perform their function they are not only serving God, but their wives and children also.

Fathers, have you ever considered yourself to be a priest?

You have been chosen and ordained by God to lead and serve as a priest over the institution He has created - your family. Quit looking at your inabilities and weaknesses and start looking to God's promises to you and His power and might that will enable you to accomplish the task He has given you.

The responsible father is a witness of the Christian faith to his family.

"You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you..." V. 10

- Devoutly - *Holy, pious, sacred, dedicated to God.*
- Uprightly – *With integrity and honesty, just, uprightness of character and behavior, daily desiring to live life according to what pleases God.*
- Blamelessly - *Faultless, able to stand a critics' scrutiny.*

Fathers are called by God to be the spiritual leaders in the home and role models to their children. A father does not abandon his responsibility to his wife to disciple the children, but takes the authority as the priest in his home. A responsible father does not compromise in his speech, nor does he find pleasure in things that might stumble or offend his children.

The responsible father makes time for the training, teaching, and discipling his children in the faith.

“...we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children.” V. 11

- Exhort - *To call to one's side, to encourage.*
- Encourage or Comfort - *To inspire, support; console in time of trouble or worry, soothing encouragement designed to cheer up and to inspire correct behavior.*
- Implore - *To call or pray for earnestly, giving personal witness. Solemn, earnest entreaty, urging.*

To train is to *raise up to maturity or to disciple*. The responsible father does not neglect his God-given role nor does he delegate it to his wife, but takes the authority as the leader, shepherd, and servant in the home.

The responsible father is a teacher-manager in his home.

“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Ephesians 6:4

He is to train his children. Not to say that mothers are not to be part of the training. They are to be part of all aspects of discipline, but not the one ultimately responsible.

*“One who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence.”
1 Timothy 3:4*

To rule is to manage. The father is to see that his children obey. He is the disciplinarian.

Fathers, what principles have you learned from 1 Thessalonians 2 that have most ministered to you about your role as a father? _____

How does this biblical role differ from your current parenting style? _____

Biblical Roles of the Responsible Mother

HOMEWORK

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

(Review and discuss as a couple, if married)

Because God places such high value on the family, and because He knew that raising children would be a challenging, and often overwhelming responsibility, He lovingly provided instructions for parents in His Word. The Bible is our parenting manual.

Parenting is a privilege! It is God's desire to bless the marriage relationship, in order that it would produce "godly offspring."

"But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth."

-Malachi 2:15

Though 1 Thessalonians 2:7-13 is instruction for spiritual parenting and discipleship (mature Christians helping young believers grow in the faith), the roles of the mother and the father in the maturing process of the child are clearly outlined.

As Christian parents, our desire for our children should, above all else, be that they become godly, mature adults. We should diligently pray for our children as the apostle Paul prayed for the young Thessalonica believers, that they would,

"...walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory."
-1 Thessalonians 2:12.

The Caring Mother

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

The caring mother is gentle with her children.

"But we proved to be gentle among you..." V. 7

- Gentle = *Mild, peaceable, quiet, composed.*

Some women are gentle by nature, while others have a coarser demeanor. The word *proved* in this verse originated from a Hebrew word implying *a state of change, condition, or the passing from one state to another, to become*. By determining to yield daily to the Holy Spirit, He will cause us to become all that God calls us to be! A gentle mother *is not* out of control, angry, yelling, and judging.

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

The caring mother nurtures her children.

"...as a nursing mother..." V. 7

- Nurse - *The act of nursing, suckle, nourish, train, something that nourishes, to supply with nourishment, to educate or foster, to further the development of someone of something.*

From the time of conception and throughout the life of the child, a mother is called to nurture her children. Obviously the methods of nurturing change with the maturity of the child, but a mother's heart should always be to nourish and build up her children. The role of the mother is to make her children feel secure in her love and acceptance, by her actions and her words. A nurturing mother *does not* use harsh words, ignore her children, or withhold affection from them.

The caring mother is tender with her children.

"...tenderly cares for her own children." V. 7

- Tender Care (Cherish) - *To give heed to, to pay attention to, to minister, to soften by heat, to keep warm as of birds covering their young with feathers, to cherish with tender love, to foster with tender care." Vine's Expository Dictionary*

A caring mother always keeps her heart soft and tender towards her children, which is not always easy. It is easy for a mother to become hardened or calloused from disappointment, frustration, fatigue, or other pressures. A caring mother must continually be yielding to the Holy Spirit to guard her heart. A tender mother forgives her children and seeks their forgiveness when she has been wrong.

The caring mother displays affection for her children.

"Having so fond an affection for..." V. 8

- Fond affection (affectionately desirous) - *A longing or yearning after, prizing highly.*

Nurturing, care, and fond affection require touch. A mother must affirm her children with hugs, kisses, encouraging words, and other appropriate displays of affection. An affectionate mother *knows* her children individually and studies how to make each child feel special by baking a cake, leaving notes in their lunches, or doing individual activities with them.

The caring mother gives of herself in order to do what is best for her children.

"...well pleased to impart to you the gospel of God but also our own lives..." V. 8

The caring mother understands that her priority is to place the loving and training of her children before her own needs. She loves her children with God's *supernatural* love, despite the mistakes, failures, and sin nature of her children.

Mothers, what principles have you learned from 1 Thessalonians 2 that have most ministered to you about your role as a mother?

How does this biblical role differ from your current parenting style?

Starting over with God's Management Style HOMEWORK

(Review and discuss as a couple, if married)

God's Word can be sobering. As we recognize where we are in comparison to where we *ought to be*, there is the temptation to judge and accuse one another or become discouraged and hopeless about our situation.

Be encouraged! God is able to accomplish in and through us what we are incapable of doing in our own strength and wisdom. God will be faithful to intercede, mend, and bless, but you must be obedient and take the following steps.

1. Confess your faults, failures, and sins to the Lord. As you are transparent and honest with God, He will faithfully forgive and restore.

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

- 1 John 1:9

2. Go to those whom you have wronged (spouse and/or children), confess your failures, lack of understanding, or sin. Then pray together, recommitting your home to the Lord.

"...confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed..."

- James 5:16

3. Establish a daily habit of personal and family devotions (prayer and reading the Word of God).

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

- Matthew 6:33

4. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill your heart with the kind of love you need to minister to others in your home.

"...the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

- Romans 5:5

"If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."

- John 13:17

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Session Six

Discipling Your Children

Parenting is a Ministry
Discipling Your Children – A Personal Evaluation
Parent Discussion Homework

1. List the Biblical truths and/or parenting principles that the Lord has revealed to you (or reminded you of) in this lesson.

2. Review *Deuteronomy 6:7-9* again. Discuss and describe the elements of discipling your children according to this passage.

3. Take a moment to ponder *Psalms 1:1-3*. Does this describe your life? Yes No
Explain _____

4. Write out your commitment to make changes where needed and to diligently disciple your children.

- Pray, asking God to help you follow through and get started.
- Choose the most convenient night of the week.
- Commit to a starting date.
- Tell your kids about the family Bible study night.
- Get started, remain consistent, and watch God bless your family!

Eliminating Inappropriate Entertainment

Parent Discussion Homework

(Review and discuss as a couple, if married)

1. Make a list of the music, videos, video games, magazines, posters, television programs, books, and other forms of entertainment that you and/or your children are currently enjoying that need to be eliminated. A simple question that will help you sort through this exercise is: *If Jesus visited your home today, do you believe He would approve of these materials?*

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

2. Do you need to make some changes in your home in this area? Yes No
3. Write out your commitment to make changes where needed and to diligently disciple your children on the subject of appropriate forms and content of entertainment.

Effecting Change

Parents should be careful ***not*** to act impulsively or like tyrants in an effort to make these changes. Parents should ***not*** go through their teen's bedroom with a vengeance, tearing posters off the walls and destroying music. Your children should be approached with love, humility, and without anger or arrogance.

If you have previously allowed inappropriate entertainment in your home, take the following steps:

- Pray and seek the LORD'S guidance and wisdom.
 - Discuss and agree as a couple on what items should be discarded.
 - If your child has purchased these items with their own money, with either your explicit or implied permission, you may, if applicable, offer to replace the inappropriate entertainment with reasonable appropriate entertainment of your child's choice.
4. Discuss together your plan of action on how, **together**, you are going to make these changes. Write out your plans.

How to Teach Your Children God's Precepts & Commandments

HOMework

(Review and discuss as a couple, if married)

- A. Parents should continually evaluate themselves biblically and be faithfully obedient to Scripture in order to avoid hypocrisy when correcting their children. Remember to practice forgiveness. God knows that we will fall short. The key is to surrender to His will and purpose daily. Many parents are practicing bad habits daily, but do nothing about it.

"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." James 1:22

- B. Parents should be unified, one in mind and judgment, if possible. If a spouse is an unbeliever, the believing parent can lead in this area.

"Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." Philippians 2:2

- C. Christian fathers should pray with their spouses and children every day. Single mothers or women with unsaved husbands can initiate prayer with children.

"Pray without ceasing." 1Thessalonians 5:17

- D. Parents should lead in regular family Bible studies, at least once weekly, and help their children develop a daily personal devotional time. Father and mother can split up the duties. For example: mom with younger ones and dad with teens.

"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge." 2 Peter 1:5

In leading Bible studies with your children, keep in mind the following points:

- 1) **Keep it simple** - Your objective is to instill God's Word in your children's hearts, not trying to produce Bible scholars!
- 2) **Keep it short** - All family members have different attention spans. Be sensitive to that fact in order to keep Bible studies a fun family time rather than a lecture. Starting small (15 to 20 minutes) and building from there is fine.
- 3) **Try to make it exciting** - Your love and excitement for your faith will transfer to your children. You can use games, stories, videos, TV, current events, etc.
- 4) **Be flexible** - All families experience unexpected events and schedule changes (important events, i.e., child's sports, school activities, etc). If necessary, re-schedule your Bible study night to an alternate day to accommodate changes. Don't be so rigid that you become legalistic.
- 5) **Be consistent** - While flexibility is sometimes a necessity, you must be consistent with your Bible studies. Don't discontinue, for instance, because your son or daughter wants to play sports. Make Bible study a regular part of your family life.

- 6) **Be realistic with your expectations** - Teaching our children about God should occur over a lifetime. Remember that you are sowing seeds now. It may not be harvest time quite yet!
- 7) **Don't put off starting** - Change can be a bit uncomfortable. You may be nervous, or afraid that it won't go the way you've planned. Review the previous points and get started. You can develop your program as you go, personalizing the Bible study for your particular family. You may want to purchase age-appropriate daily devotionals for your children, to help them develop a daily relationship with Jesus.

Remember that God has called parents to disciple their children. God blesses obedience; therefore we should not let our fears, pride, busyness, or our inability stand in the way of our obedience. Trust God and get started!

Recommended Devotional and Discipleship Books **HOMEWORK**

(Review and discuss as a couple, if married)

The Bible

Strong Foundation Discipleship Workbook by *Family Discipleship Ministries*

Meet the Bible by *Philip Yancey and Brenda Quinn*

Everyday With Jesus by *Greg Laurie*

Self-Confrontation by *John C. Broger*

Experiencing God by *Henry Blackaby*

Drawing Near by *John F. MacArthur*

My Utmost for His Highest by *Oswald Chambers*

The One Year Book of Psalms by *William J. Petersen and Randy Petersen*

Streams in the Desert by *Mrs. Charles E. Cowman*.

Devotional and Discipleship Books for Children and Adolescents

Favorite Bible Stories, grades 3 & 4 by *Rainbow Books*

Talksheets™ - Junior High by *Youth Specialties*

Talksheets™ - More Junior High by *Youth Specialties*

Talksheets™ - High School by *Youth Specialties*

Talksheets™ - More High School by *Youth Specialties*

God and Me! Devotions for Girls, ages 2–12 by *Legacy Press*

Growing Little Women by *Donna J. Miller with Linda Holland*

Youth Devotions by *Josh McDowell*

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Session Seven

Disciplining Your Children

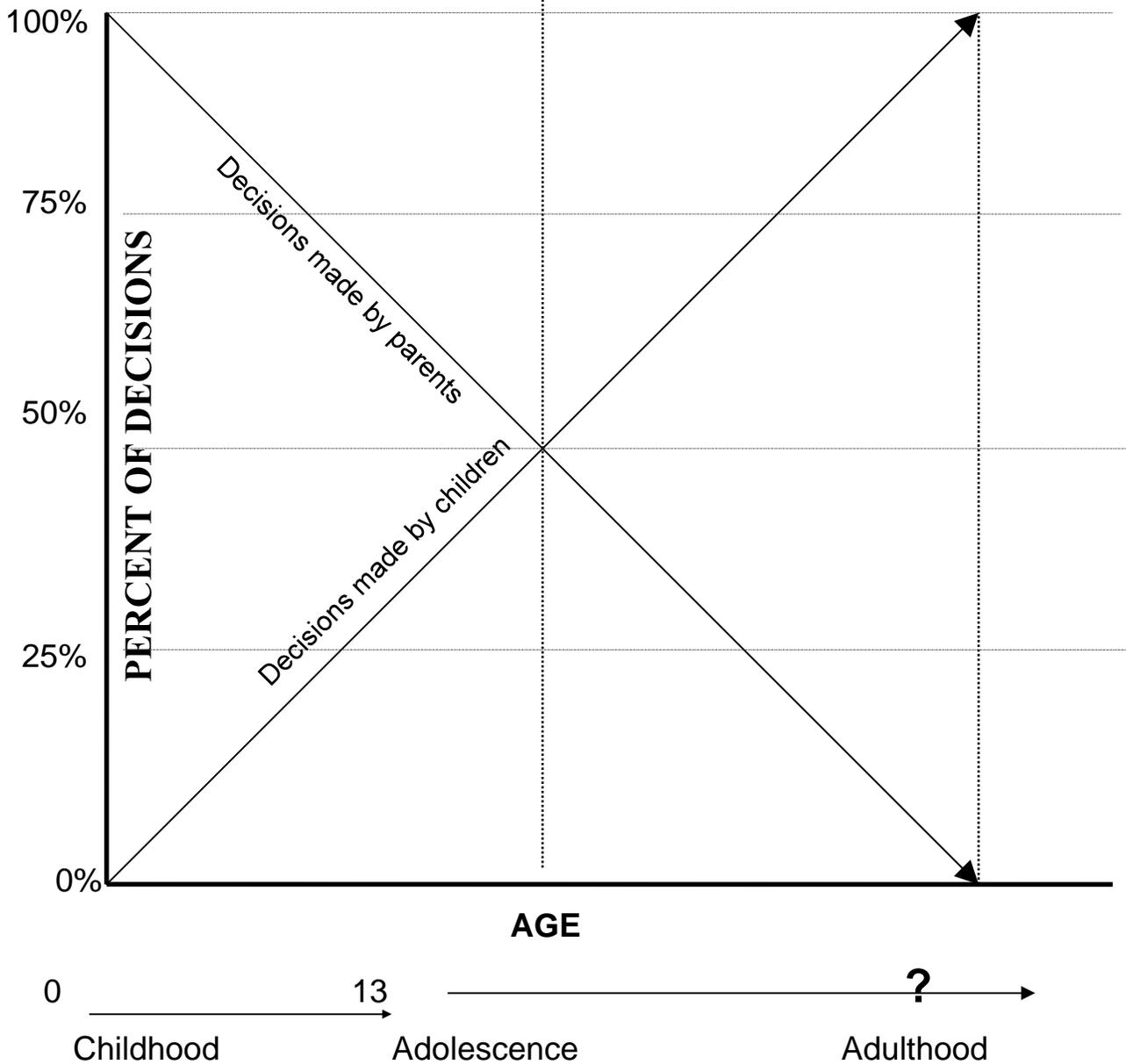
PARENTING IS A MINISTRY

Session Seven

Disciplining Your Children - Training Up Your Children

DISCIPLINE FOR RAISING ADULTS

PARENTS' DECISIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES GRAPH



If you don't know where you are going you will probably end up there!

Training or Controlling?

- **Controlling** – *To exercise power over; to dominate or rule; a restraining force.*

A *Controller* is a dictator, not a trainer. He is one who will not accept failure, has an attitude that failure is wrong, and a direct threat to their parenting. A controller is motivated by self-fulfillment.

2 Timothy 2:24-26 *“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”*

- **Training** – *To cause to grow as desired; to make or become prepared or skilled.*

Like a small tree that has a certain bent or lean to it. You cannot straighten it out by force or it will break. The trainer must gradually and persistently keep pressure on it to eventually make it straight. A trainer is motivated by a desire for God’s best for others.

Proverbs 22:6 – *“Train up a child in the way he should go...”*

Disciplining to Maturity

Ephesians 6:4 *“Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”*

- **Bring them up** – *To bring up to maturity; to train or educate.*
- **Training** – *Discipline; chastening; correction; educative discipline (Vines Expository Dictionary says, “Discipline that regulates character”)*
- **Admonition** – *Instruction; warning; exhortation; any word of encouragement or reproof which leads to correct behavior.*

Hebrews 12:11 "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

4. Consistency

How important is consistency?

No Consistency = No Rules
No Rules = No Training
No Training = No Peace!

Know Consistency = Know Peace!

One of the reasons that parents do not like to write out their rules and disciplines is because it will hold them accountable to follow through!

How Do Children Think and Choose?

Let's Make a Deal

 Door #1 Follow Rules	 Door #2 Break Rules Accept Discipline	 Door #3 No Rules No Discipline
---	---	--

Each child is unique in his or her own way.

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

Some children may need:

- More discipline
- More boundaries
- Tougher consequences

Parenting is a Ministry
Family Rules and Disciplines
Parent Discussion Homework
(This is an exercise only)

1. Take some time as a couple (if married) and write out your current rules and the way you are currently disciplining. If you need more space use a separate sheet of paper. If there are any rules or disciplines that you do not 100% agree on together, put an asterisk beside them.

Rule 1: _____

Discipline _____

Rule 2: _____

Discipline _____

Rule 3: _____

Discipline _____

Rule 4: _____

Discipline _____

Rule 5: _____

Discipline _____

Rule 6: _____

Discipline _____

2. What has been the punishment you are using in the event that your child refuses to accept the discipline?

Parenting is a Ministry
Chore List
Parent Discussion Homework
(This is an exercise only)

1. Discuss together (if married) the chores you have given to each of your children. It's good to use another note pad or make copies of this sheet for this exercise. Write your child's name at the top of the page and then write out the chores and form of discipline used in the event they did not complete the chore.

Chore: _____

Discipline _____

2. What has been the punishment used in the event the child did not accept the discipline for not doing the chore?

Disciplining Behavior, Not Attitudes & Revenge versus Training

Parent Discussion Homework

(Review and discuss as a couple, if married)

There is a lot of confusion when it comes to how parents should deal with bad attitudes. As you read through the following worksheet, I believe you will get a better perspective on how you should deal with your children's bad attitudes. What to do and also what not to do.

Attitude – A posture or position; feeling; opinion or mood.

Behavior – The act or manner of behaving.

- Behavior is something we do or don't do, by either breaking a rule or not doing what is expected of us.

God gave us our emotions.

"Be angry, and do not sin..." Psalms 4:4

Attitudes stem from the heart. The heart of a child can only be changed through their willingness to accept our authority, to receive through us, the love of Christ and God's instructions for them.

Behaviors are changed through discipline or training.

- A rebellious heart is a miserable heart. It has no peace, joy, contentment, or lasting pleasure – all by God's design.
- If you know that your child is harboring bitterness toward you, or is rebelling against God's plan for their life, it requires your commitment to prayer and patience, without compromise. To compromise means several things for parents:
 - A) You allow a child's bad attitude to make you angry or resentful. You misrepresent God in the way you treat your child.
 - B) You allow the child's bad attitude to rob you of your inner peace.
 - C) You allow the child's bad attitude to dictate how you follow through with your agreed method of discipline either by not disciplining or adding to it.

We must allow our children to feel the way they feel.

In many cases children use this as a form of manipulation or revenge.

Manipulation - to control or play upon by artful, unfair, or insidious means, especially to one's own advantage.

- Some children will try to manipulate parents with attitudes so the parents will not follow through with a discipline. They will even premeditatedly attempt to set the parents up to guilt the parents into allowing them to do something they would not normally permit them do.

- When children know that if they exhibit a bad attitude and it bothers their parents, this often prompts them to continue this behavior. This is our sin nature to get revenge. When their pouty, moody, or bad attitude provokes you to anger or sadness, you can be the one encouraging them to continue in this childish, manipulative practice. It takes two to play this game.

When we become angry, this gives our children satisfaction that is very damaging to his/her character development, your faith, and your authority. It is important to not show any emotion when disciplining or correcting our children. Stay to the discipline plan. If you don't respond in the way they want or, in other words, if you don't serve the ball back to them, they will eventually quit playing this game.

If you have been playing this sinful game for a while it may take some time to break the bad habit, for both of you. Be patient and stay the course and the Lord will have victory. **Remember:** if the bad attitude turns into a poor behavior choice such as: yelling at you, a bad word, kicking the wall, slamming the door, etc. then you discipline that behavior, not the attitude.

Revenge means to inflict injury in return for an insult.

The Lord has instructed us to train up our children, not inflict injury in reaction to their childish and foolish choices. Is our attitude one that wants to get even with them and/or hurt them in some way because they just won't do what we ask? This is our problem, not our children's fault. The Lord gave us these children and sometimes it is hard to raise them in the way He desires. If you have the wrong motive in the disciplining of your children, you should repent immediately and ask for forgiveness from both your child and the Lord.

- **Revenge does not train our children, but instead, causes them to become defiant.** This will lead to division between the parents and the children.

Training = Discipline

- Training teaches our children. It is fair and not motivated by anger or revenge. It transforms and shapes our children's character without destroying or bringing division.

Notes:

Parenting is a Ministry
Disciplining Behavior
Parent Discussion Homework

1. Discuss together (if married) the Attitude and Behavior section on page 55 along with pages 58-59. Write out what you believe are the typical bad attitudes you see manifesting in each of your children (you may want to use a separate sheet of paper for this exercise). It is important for you, as a husband and wife, to be unified in your plan for dealing with this. Try to clarify the difference between their attitudes and what the behavior is that may stem from these attitudes.

Child's Name: _____

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Session Eight

Disciplining Your Children

Examples of Rules and Disciplines

Rule 1: Respect parents.

Discipline: Time out (sit in a chair, not a corner).

The amount of time spent in time out should be equivalent to the child's age. For example, a three-year-old sits for three minutes. Explain to them that their bottom stays in chair, and no scooting. If they get out, they are asking for the motivator – a spanking. See *Principles for the Use of Spanking*.

Rule 2: Bedtime (in their own bed).

Discipline: Spanking (no yelling).

Cover your bases – water, light, door open, and pray with them.

Rule 3: Pick up toys.

Discipline: Take toys away for one or two days.

Rule 4: Obey Parents (“No” means No).

Discipline: Time out.

Principles for the Use of Spanking

Using a measured amount of pain to motivate

“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

1. Choose ahead of time what behavior will be corrected with a spanking (Proverbs 6:16-19). Remember that punishment is given only when they refuse the discipline.
2. Spank in love. For punishment to be effective it must be in the context of a loving relationship; not accompanied with yelling, screaming, or making degrading or disrespectful comments.
3. Spank in private, away from brothers, sisters or other adults and children.
4. Be consistent. If you say you're going to spank your child for a certain punishment, make sure you always follow through.
5. Talk with your child in a firm but loving voice and explain why punishment is taking place.
6. Affirm your love after punishment. Only hug if they want it.
7. Spank your child as soon as possible after he/she refuses your discipline, and use the opportunity to “motivate” your child to accept your training.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT HOMEWORK

Applied Correctly

(Review and discuss as a couple, if married)

Positive reinforcement is using charts, graphs, or some other system to record a child's behavior, accompanied with ongoing rewards for good behavior. It is not very effective for the strong-willed child or beneficial for the compliant child for the following reasons.

- Love, not gifts or gimmicks, is the most powerful motivator and the most powerful way to build self-worth.
- Parents should be daily complimenting and praising their children because they are a gift from God, not tied to performance.
- Good behavior is expected, not rewarded. Our love toward them and how we show it should not change because of their failures.
- It can be beneficial for parents to use *special incentives* for a child who is struggling to overcome a particular weakness or personal challenge, such as bedwetting or academic struggles in school. For example: a special outing with the child or a material reward if they put forth the effort and improve in a specific area, not an ongoing reward system for perpetual behavior.
- If you have a compliant child whose natural bent is to please mom and dad they will find this system very appealing. However, if they have a brother or sister who is not compliant, but has a strong-willed bent (the strong-willed child), they will begin to resent their compliant sibling and struggle with their own self-worth. They can easily become discouraged because their compliant sibling receives more gifts and/or affirmation than they receive from what they perceive comes more natural to the compliant sibling.
- A perpetual system of rewards for good behavior for even a younger compliant child can set the stage for an entitlement mentality within the compliant child as he or she grows older. Once the rewards are removed, or become unsatisfactory, the compliant child may rebel in an effort to manipulate the reinstatement or improvement of the reward system to his or her benefit. The child has learned to selfishly seek the reward first and the good behavior has become only a means to a reward. Simple chores may not get done if they are not accompanied by a reward. This is teaching the child to serve only when it has personal benefit for them.

The parent's attitude toward their child's failures should be similar to when the child first began to walk; proud and excited when they first stood on their own and took their first steps. When they fell, the parents lovingly picked them up and encouraged them to try again, confident that in time they would develop, mature, and learn to walk on their own.

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Session Nine

Discipline Box

Nine to Twelve Year Olds

If the foundation of training (rules and discipline) has been laid during the first nine years, the transition into adolescence will be smoother.

It is a good idea to plan to stop spanking your child by the time they are twelve. Some strong-willed children absolutely need to be spanked in order to get them to bend, but in most cases, by the time a child reaches 12 or 13, spanking should not be used as punishment.

Examples of Rules and Disciplines

Rule 1: Respect one another at all times.

Discipline: Draw one item from the Discipline Box.

Rule 2: No physical fighting or verbal arguing.

Discipline: Apologize and ½ hour of Saturday work.

Rule 3: Be ready for school by 7:15 a.m.

Discipline: Be awakened at 5:00 a.m. the following morning or go to bed 1 hour earlier.

Rule 4: Clean up your own messes expediently.

Discipline: Clean up the mess and draw one item from the Discipline Box.

Rule 5: Return home by a specific time from an approved outing.

Discipline: Restriction for two days.

Rule 6: Telephone privileges until 9:00 p.m. (**with approval**).

Discipline: No telephone privileges for two days.

Thirteen to Eighteen Year Olds

Kids go through a multitude of changes between the ages 13 and 15. This season of change is called *puberty*.

Physically, they are growing rapidly, developing their sexuality, and their strength increases.

Emotionally, they are becoming more independent. They are much more aware of the opposite sex, they have a strong desire to be accepted by their peers, and they begin developing close friendships.

Cognitively, they begin to think abstractly and symbolically, which means, in a nutshell, that they begin to think a lot like we think! They are able to see another person's point of view, they test the structure and values they were raised with, and they become more goal-oriented.

NEW FAMILY RULES AND DISCIPLINES

Homework

Child's Name _____

Rule 1: _____

Discipline _____

Rule 2: _____

Discipline _____

Rule 3: _____

Discipline _____

Rule 4: _____

Discipline _____

Rule 5: _____

Discipline _____

Rule 6: _____

Discipline _____

Rule 7: _____

Discipline _____

Rule 8: _____

Discipline _____

Rule 9: _____

Discipline _____

Rule 10: _____

Discipline _____

NEW CHORE LIST Homework

Child's Name _____

Chore: _____

Day _____ Time _____

Discipline _____

Parenting is a Ministry
Parent Discussion Homework
(If married, complete and discuss as a couple)

1. Take some time to review this lesson and create your own **Discipline Box** and/or **List**. You *may* want to get your children involved with this exercise – it can be lots of fun to do together.
2. Make copies of the blank **New Rules** and **New Chores** list (pgs. 74-75) and complete them with what you have learned. I do not recommend having your children be a part of the discussion of what the rules and chores are going to be. This should be done by the parents only.
3. Discuss pages 63-64 in Session 8, *Principles for the Use of Spanking*. Is there anything that you need to change that you may be doing or not doing in this area? Remember: this is punishment, not a discipline so if you are planning to implement this as part of your training plan, it is to be used when the child refuses to accept the discipline (training). It does not replace the discipline. The discipline must be completed also. If, after the spanking, the child still refuses to do the discipline, he/she is to sit in a chair or stay in their room until they are willing to accept the discipline.
4. If you have older children – see page 77 – make a *Discipline List*.
5. Discuss together, if married, what form of punishment you are going to use for your children. Have a clear plan in place so you are not lead by your emotions in any situation. See page 78, *Punishment for Teens*, for some suggestions.
6. Here are some suggestions for age appropriate chores (disciplines) for children ages 6 to 12.

Vacuum Living Room

Empty trash in all Bathrooms

Dust Living Room

Vacuum Any Room a Parent Chooses.

Sweep the Kitchen.

Dust Baseboards.

Brush Dog or Cat.

Clean up Play/Toy area.

Dust Window Sills.

Sweep the Patio.

Clean Animal/s Dishes.

Clean up (tidy) Video/DVD area.

The Discipline List HOMEWORK

(Review and discuss as a couple, if married)

If you have teenagers you can adapt the Discipline Box concept using a list rather than a box.

- ◆ Make a list of work projects that are not already part of your children's weekly or regularly assigned chores. These short work projects should be those that are not normally completed on a weekly basis, like spring or fall cleaning projects, or they can be those work projects that the parents do themselves on a regularly scheduled basis.
- ◆ Keep in mind the discipline work should take between 10 to 20 minutes.
- ◆ For a discipline, they do whatever is next on the list.
- ◆ Avoid making the list too difficult. Remember this is a training tool for teaching them the personal characteristics of a mature adult. This is not the parents getting revenge on their children.
- ◆ This list can be used when a related discipline is not applicable. For example: if your child is disrespectful, use the list. If your child comes home late, a related discipline of in-home restriction for 3 days can be used instead of the list.
- ◆ If you have a strong-willed child, you may need to consider having a large number of work projects on the list so that your child is not doing a discipline he/she has recently done.
- ◆ If the child does not perform the discipline satisfactorily, as you have previously trained your child, then inform your child that he/she is to complete the original discipline and be in *Shut Down* until it is done correctly. See page 71 for details on *Shut Down*.
- ◆ We recommend that the parent put their initial in the box after he/she has inspected the work performed by their child versus putting a check mark that any child can write.
- ◆ When your children have completed the list, start again at the beginning of the list.

The Discipline List

1. Vacuum a particular room										
2. Clean all mirrors in bathroom										
3. Clean sink and bathtub in bathroom										
4. Clean toilet										
5. Clean behind couch, silk flower in basket, & TV										
6. Clean up backyard – dog										
7. Mow the backyard										
8. Pull weeds in front yard for 10'x20' area or 15 min.										
9. Water back yard – 20 minutes										
10. Water front yard – 15 minutes										
11. Wash four windows inside and out										
12. Wash car										
13. Vacuum inside of car										
14. Sweep garage										
15. Clean out refrigerator										

OTHER PUNISHMENT SUGGESTIONS

HOMEWORK

The Motivator

(Review and discuss as a couple, if married)

SHUT DOWN

If your child refuses the discipline, an effective punishment is *Shut Down*. *Shut Down* means that your child has no privileges; no television, telephone, music, or friends over, and may include being confined to their bedroom. Their only freedoms will be to go to school, church, eat meals, use the restroom, and do their chores and homework. This continues until they are willing to accept the discipline. *Shut Down* can last for five minutes or five days (or longer). It is up to them.

SATURDAY WORK DAY

An effective punishment for a teenager who refuses to accept the authority left in charge in the absence of the father (i.e. mother, stepparent, grandparent, babysitter, or guardian).

- Have your child work on Saturday morning to complete tasks given. For example, give them a "TO DO" list to begin at 8 AM and they will be done when everything on the list is finished correctly. This is a great time to get those things done around the house you can't seem to get to. If they choose to drag the work out longer than it should take, let them, but until all the work is done correctly, they are in that *Shut Down* mode.

DRIVER'S LICENSE

Rescind license or permit (this can be done with written request from parent to the DMV). This should only be used if a child is rebelling against the rules and disciplines and is leaving in their car or your car. If used as a discipline – you must have a designated time period that it is taken away for and returned after that set time, not when their attitude is better.

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Session Ten

Starting Over

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Appendices

- **Parent Self-Evaluation Checklist**
- **Parent's Questionnaire for Youth Turning Age 18**
- **Seminar Comments Form**

Parent Self-Evaluation Checklist

(Review and discuss as a couple, if married)

Now that you have established your parenting structure, which includes the *Four Tools of Training* enforced in love, you may experience times of defeat or frustration and begin believing that this parenting style does not work for your family. If this happens, don't panic and look to the world's methods! Don't fall back on old habits! Instead, use the following evaluation checklist to discern the true source of the problem.

Your Spiritual Foundation

- How is your devotional life? Read *Psalm 1:1-3*. Would you use words like worshiping, listening, thanking, confessing, interceding, etc. to describe your daily communication with God?
- Do you read and meditate upon God's Word in a daily quiet time?
- Are you trusting God with your finances and giving tithes regularly?
- Are your priorities in accordance with God's desires for you and your family? Is the fruit of the Spirit evident in your life?

Remember: You must depend upon The Lord! The key is not your parenting methods, but a relationship with God!

Communicating In Love

- Take the Effective Listening Self-Evaluation in *Loving Communication* (pages 18-19).
- Have you been reacting in the flesh to your children or responding to them in love?
- Take a moment and review *What Love Is Not* (pages 14-17). Are there areas where you need to improve in your communication or apologize to your children?

Remember: Your communication with and toward your child reflects the value you have placed upon them.

Training Your Children Through Discipleship and Discipline

- The best way to train is by personal example. How are you doing?
- If married, are you and your spouse working together and supporting one another? How is your management style? Who is the main disciplinarian?
- Are you sticking to your rules and using **only** the pre-determined disciplines and punishment, or has nagging, yelling, empty threats, and inconsistency crept back in?
- Are you praying regularly with your children? Have you followed through with your commitment to have a weekly family Bible study?

Remember: God loves you and He loves your children. You must trust Him. He did not give you the wrong children. He has not given you a task beyond your ability to accomplish as you trust in Him and obey His will.

Has God revealed areas in your family relationships where you have drifted off-course? If so, follow the steps outlined below to get your home back on course.

1. Confess to God, acknowledging your weaknesses, mistakes, or failures.
2. Receive God's forgiveness. Allow Him to embrace you in His arms of love and grace.
3. Repent by turning away from your error and commit to walk in obedience to His will.

Parent's Questionnaire for Youth Turning Age 18

(Revealing the parents' reality vs. the child's possible delusion)

The following questions are designed for discussion with your child just prior to his or her 18th birthday and/or for parents who have a child over 18 living at home. They are most effective when discussed in a relaxed setting, for the purpose of stimulating your child to think, and to encourage a more adult relationship with your child as they are entering adulthood. It will also reveal what they believe is going to change or has changed in their relationship with you and your support of them.

Give one copy to your child to fill out & one copy for you to fill out. Set a date and time when you will sit down with your child to discuss their answers and share your answers (reality) with them.

1. At 18 what do mom and I owe you besides our love?

2. Do you believe that the reason we help you the way we do is because we love you? Yes No

**3. Should we be doing more for you than we are currently doing?
 Yes No if yes, what should we be doing?**

4. Do we have the right to require anything of you in return for you continuing to live in our home? Yes No Explain.

5. If you do not agree with something we ask or require of you what should you do?

6. If you ignore our request and do something that we have made clear not to do, what do you think we should do? What should you do?

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