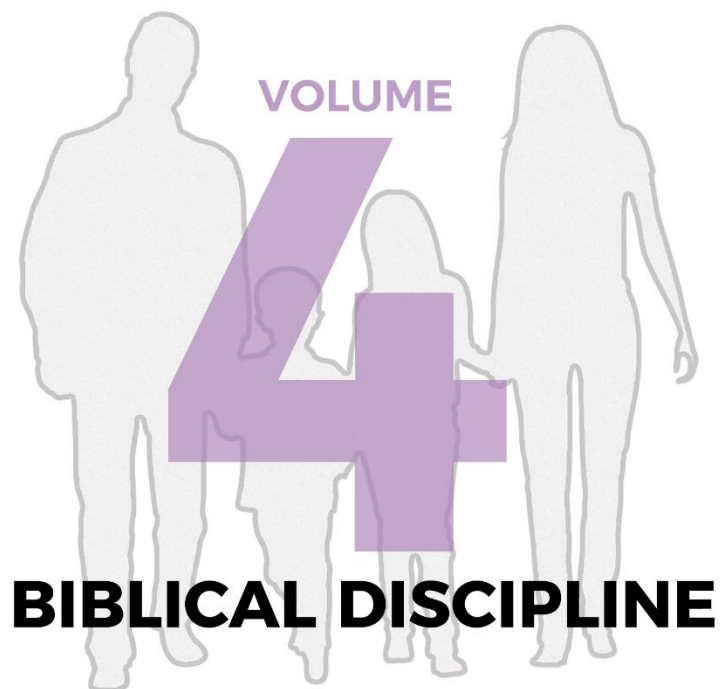


PARENTING IS A MINISTRY SERIES

Craig Caster



Biblical Discipline is volume 4
in the Parenting Is a Ministry series.

Other Titles in the Parenting Is a Ministry Series

Transformational Parenting (volume 1)
Loving Communication (volume 2)
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Biblical Discipline

Parenting Is a Ministry Series

Volume 4

For Traditional, Blended, and Single-Parent Families

Craig Caster

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:19–20)

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Preface

Most parents would agree on at least two things: raising children can be wonderful *and difficult*. Adjustments must be made for the uniqueness of each personality, and keeping children entertained can be a challenge. But the real bummer is discipline. Couples must work as a team, single parents are working without backup, and every parent faces the challenge of protecting and training each child from birth to adulthood. *When, where, how, how much, how often, how long, and is this really working* are just a few of the questions crowding the thoughts of a parent staring into the face of a precious, disobedient child. The truth is, most parents today are not sure where to turn, believe their own parents did just an okay job, and feel poorly equipped themselves.

But there is help for those who will listen. God, the creator of all things, has not left us without guidance. He is the creator of the institution we call family and has given us clear instructions in His Word on how to be successful. We need to take this seriously because we have an enemy. The Bible tells us that the devil, Satan, is working against us and would love to break down the strength of the family, which is also an attack against the church, society, and our Christian witness to a lost world. But God, knowing all our needs, gives us both His Word and the Holy Spirit, which is enough to win any battle.

Sadly, most Christians are not aware that the Bible is relevant for raising children, so they turn to past experience or worldly philosophy for help. But now is the time to listen and seek God's wisdom and guidance to strengthen our families. If we are not willing to submit to our Creator, then what can we expect for the future? When we operate outside of God's will, the result is chaos and destruction. It may come slowly, so we hardly notice, but the end is pain.

The Parenting Is a Ministry series will help you learn God's plan for raising children. Whether you function as a traditional family, blended family, single-parent family, or grandparents raising grandchildren, God's parenting principles are effective and conclusive. We are all God's children, parent and child alike, and He would never leave us without the possibility of a joy-filled, successful life.

May God bless you through His wonderful, life-changing principles and bless your family as you allow Him to transform you into the parent He desires you to be.

Pray this prayer together.

Dear Lord Jesus, we are asking for Your help and wisdom to be parents who honor and glorify You. Please give us the faith to trust You and the grace to change those things we are doing wrong. Help us start doing Your will in the way we love and train our children. Amen.

Introduction

This workbook is designed to bring you onto the path of discipleship, which means walking in God's principles. When we use words like *walk*, we hope you understand that living in these principles is just as fundamental as learning to walk.

The goals of our workbook are:

1. to show you that God provides principles for parenting,
2. to equip you with tools and applications for applying these principles, and
3. to guide your family into the forgiveness, healing, and unity that comes through obedience to God.

Family Discipleship Ministries exists to help educate the body of Christ in vital areas. Failure in discipleship is directly related to failure in parenting. And how do we know this? By what we have seen, experienced, and found in proven statistics today.

The Process

The study is divided into four volumes. Start with volume 1 and continue through each volume in order. Skipping to a volume or section that sparks your interest is tempting but not advised, because each volume and lesson build upon one another. For example, you really want to master disciplining your child so you move ahead to that study, but there are biblical principles that must be learned before you can discipline in a godly way. Work toward completing one lesson each day for five days. Building daily study with consistency is a key to spiritual success.

These principles have been tried and proven successful. I have experienced it in my own life, my own family, and also through the lives of countless people in counseling and parenting classes. Please understand, this is *not* a "Five Easy Steps to Parenting" manual. Biblical discipleship is challenging work and will require you to change some of your attitudes and behaviors. The process will require commitment and sacrifice to successfully implement the principles.

Starting Each Day

- View each daily study as time spent with your God, and expect Him to speak to you through His Word.
- Start each day with prayer, asking God to reveal where you need to change and to empower you to apply what you are learning.
- Have a reflective mindset. Do not rush through the material just to say you finished it. Give God time to speak to you, and meditate on what you learn.

Things to Note

- This work is a new priority and will require dedicated time. The lessons are to be done daily. If you miss a day, *do not skip it*, but work to complete all lessons in order.

- At times we start projects and do not finish. Consider the importance of your parenting responsibility and make a decision to faithfully complete this study. Pray about your priorities and what you are placing ahead of this commitment. Enlist the help of an accountability partner for prayer and study if necessary.
- If married, your spouse is an essential partner in this effort. Study together or separately, but always discuss what you have learned as it relates to marital and parenting issues and changes.
- Lessons may vary in the amount of information presented. After you complete each one, look ahead to the next lesson to plan your time with God and get the most out of it.
- Space is provided for answering questions and recording your thoughts and prayers. If you have downloaded and printed this workbook, we suggest you put it in a three-ring binder and include additional paper for personal journaling and notes.

DIG DEEPER

This section marks an opportunity to read Scripture and relate it to the subject being presented. During this discipleship process you will become more familiar with the Bible, biblical principles of parenting, and what God expects from you as a parent.

Self-Examination

As you study biblical principles, this section provides time for self-examination, finding areas where personal improvement is needed. Space is provided for listing insights, confessions, and prayers for strength and wisdom to make those changes. One aspect of the discipleship process is personal accountability. If God reveals that you have sinned against your spouse or children, confess your sin to them and ask for forgiveness. Practice this regularly even if it is not noted to do so.

FACT FILE

Boxes like this one provide definitions of words or phrases from the Bible. We have taken great care to use well-known, theologically sound Bible dictionaries and commentaries for clarity, referenced when possible. Many of these definitions appear in *Appendix T: Glossary*.

ACTION PLAN

After you study the biblical principles, this section challenges you to take action and apply what you have learned to your life. To be true disciples we must understand that God not only desires that we grow in knowledge, but He also requires that we live it out.

Appendix Resources

Please take advantage of the appendices at the end of the workbook. They are there for your growth, and we refer to them throughout the workbook. Before you begin this wonderful journey, please fill out *Appendix A: Parent Commitment Letter* (volume 1).

Leader's Guide

A leader's guide is available at FDM.world under Free Ministry Downloads. All materials on our website focus on discipleship and are provided free of charge.

Lesson 1

Introduction to Discipline

Parents often put more importance on discipline than discipleship, but notice that we studied discipleship first in volume 3, *Train Up Your Children*. Discipleship is foundational to living the Christian life, and everything is built upon it. Jesus told His followers to, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19). This mandate applies to ministry in our homes.

As parents, it is our responsibility to disciple our children. To do this, we need to be disciples of Christ ourselves, through personal Bible study and obedient living. The result is an abiding relationship with Christ, which enables us to properly tend to our families. This discipleship is vital: Jesus to parent, then parent to child. As our relationship with Christ transforms us, we bring glory to His name.

In this workbook, we will discover what biblical discipline is and what it is *not*. Without realizing it, much of what parents do is counterproductive and will not bring their children to maturity. But God has given us all the information we need for success. He has a plan for us to follow.

The Butterfly

Let’s begin with an interesting perspective on discipline. A nine-year-old boy was walking home from school one day and found a cocoon hanging from a branch. He had seen a video on how a butterfly emerges from a cocoon, so he broke the branch off, brought it home, and put it in a jar with holes in the lid. Every day he would come home from school and stare at the cocoon—hoping he would be able to see this miracle take place.

One day there was a small tear in the cocoon, and the butterfly was trying to wiggle out. So he sat for several hours, watching, but a nine-year-old boy has a limited attention span. Finally, he could not stand it anymore. He opened the jar, pulled out the cocoon, and began to carefully cut along the tear with a small pair of scissors. Once the cocoon was open, he pulled out the butterfly, but it looked funny. The body was fat, and the wings were shriveled. It was so heavy that it could not even hold up its own weight.

He continued to watch, believing he would see this strange-looking thing turn into a beautiful butterfly. He even picked it up and tried to help, but it would do nothing. Eventually, it died right before his eyes.

That butterfly died because God’s perfect process—the struggle, the strain, and the difficulty of emerging from the cocoon—forces the fluid out of the body into the wings. Then, when it gets out into the atmosphere, the air touches its wings and dries them out so it can fly. By removing the struggle that God had designed, the boy killed the butterfly.

DIG DEEPER

Describe what the following verse means.

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

By failing to discipline children as God has designed—and commanded—parents are actually preventing them from growing to maturity. No one likes discipline, and most of us struggle with authority. It is our human nature. Children often will respond to both discipline and authority with discomfort or some form of emotional struggle. It is normal for parents (especially mothers) to want to eliminate this struggle. But by doing so, like the butterfly, parents can contribute to the child's destruction.

When we do not follow through with appropriate discipline, we do not instill the character traits God desires for our kids. Since children do not naturally grow into mature adults, they must be trained according to God's Word and plan. If this is not done, many will suffer the result. Lack of training can lead to many types of failures in life. Surprisingly, prisons are not only filled with "bad" people, but with many average individuals who never received the proper training to develop mature character.

DIG DEEPER

List the processes and results of good and poor discipline. What is the parental responsibility?

The rod [authority] and rebuke [training] give wisdom,
But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. (Proverbs 29:15)

He who spares his rod [authority] hates his son,
But he who loves him disciplines him promptly. (Proverbs 13:24)

Chasten your son while there is hope,
And do not set your heart on his destruction. (Proverbs 19:18)

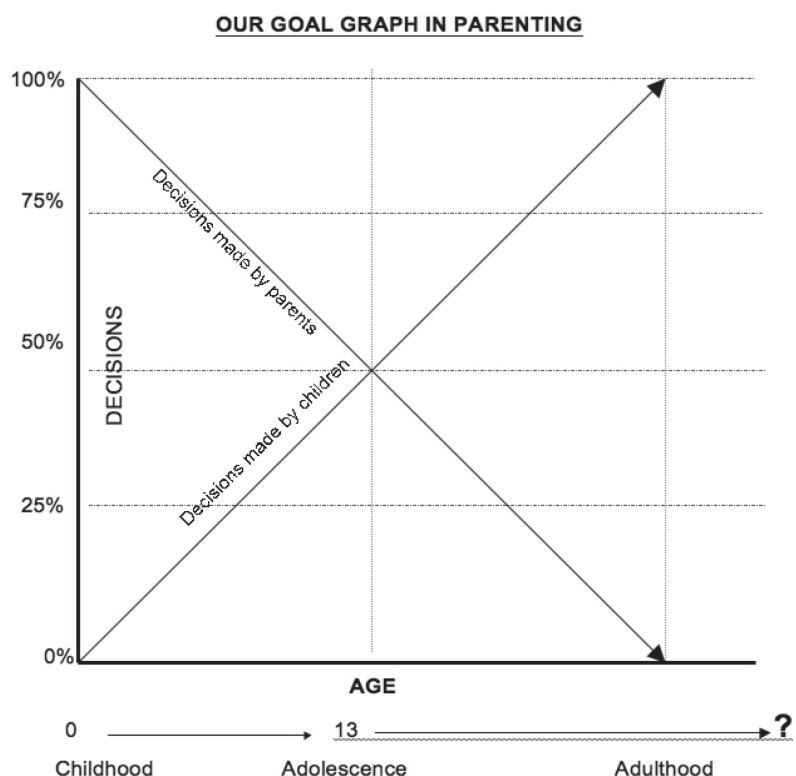
Training up our children is something God has called us to do (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4). It is often not fun and often quite difficult. Just as butterflies must struggle out of their cocoons, our kids do not enjoy the struggle of being disciplined into God's proper design for maturity (Hebrew 12:11). But we must follow through.

The wise King Solomon, knowing our natural tendency to despise discipline, encouraged his son to think otherwise and consider the reason good fathers correct their children.

My son, do not despise the chastening [discipline] of the Lord,
Nor detest His correction [training];
For whom the Lord loves He corrects,
Just as a father the son in whom he delights. (Proverbs 3:11–12)

If we have no clear goal for discipline and training a child to maturity, then it will not happen.

At the bottom of the graph, we have the age of our children, from birth to adulthood. On the left side is the number of decisions made by the children versus the number of decisions we, as their parents, make for them. In the beginning, all decisions are made by parents, which is logical. When our kids come home from the hospital, they are obviously not yet capable of choosing for themselves. But at some point on the graph, those lines cross and continue until our children are making all their own decisions.



As your children get older, the goal is for them to make healthy, responsible, wise decisions without supervision. This may seem like common sense, but without a plan in place, a method of training and instilling mature character, this will not happen. You must have a plan.

Many young adults do not know how to make wise decisions for themselves. We must move our children into maturity by issuing proper discipline. Home is the primary training ground where children grow into adulthood. Or at least, it should be. We must not let our children be molded by outsiders to believe ideas and practices that are not under our guidance and authority.

Training versus Controlling = Growth versus No Growth

God has instructed us to train up our children, not control them. The difference between the two is mainly a mindset of how we perceive our job as parents.

Controlling parents are dictators, not trainers. A symptom of this is the inability to accept failure. From the controller's perspective, failure in a child is bad, wrong, and a direct threat to parental authority. They are motivated by self-fulfillment, not God's will. They take their children's failures personally, as deliberate, as if they were purposely trying to hurt them. These types of parents are often concerned about what others think, not about what is right.

FACT FILE

Controlling—To exercise power over, to dominate or rule, to restrain; a restraining force.¹

Have you been told by your spouse that you are controlling? Have you been told that you are legalistic or have unrealistic expectations for your kids? Many times this behavior is a result of how you were raised, perhaps never feeling like you lived up to your parents' expectations.

Self-Examination 1

Do you have control issues? Pray and examine your response to failure in your children. Deeply consider what has been stated above. Describe what God puts on your heart.

If you are harsh or controlling, ask God to show you why you perceive your kids' failures this way and why you react this way. Perhaps you have not forgiven your own parents. Perhaps you are letting your own carnal nature and selfish expectations govern your parenting instead of doing it God's way. It is essential that you deal with this issue.

Childish Behavior

Parents, our job is to train as a part of our ministry. To do this properly, we need to understand what childish behavior is. A child can be foolish, disobedient, or defiant. A child's failure, even willful disobedience, is not the same as defiant rebellion. If you believe it is, you will respond to your children in the wrong way, usually in anger.

Understanding the difference between defiance and foolishness is crucial, as is your ability to adjust your response appropriately. And if all discipline is not handled first with love, your negative communication can make your child feel unloved.

FACT FILE

Defiance—When a child rebels against the discipline that follows their foolish act of immaturity.

We studied the biblical principles of *Loving Communication* (volume 2) found in 1 Corinthians 13. And have we not *all failed* at some time to follow God's instructions? This is not because we defiantly said, "I don't care what the Bible says. I am going to do it my way!" Rather, it is because

we lack the spiritual maturity and character to carry it out. However, I bet you have noticed some progress, and hopefully you realize you are simply going through God's training process.

Likewise, failure is not defiance. Even if your kids have been repeatedly told what not to do, their failures and mistakes are usually due to immaturity or foolishness. God clearly explains that children are foolish and that parents are to train them in godly wisdom.

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. (Proverbs 22:15)

The word *foolishness* means "deficient in understanding, unwise, brainless, irrational, ludicrous, a lack of judgment."² Does that not perfectly describe our children at times? They are lacking character and maturity. So why do we get so angry when they act foolishly? God's Word declares they are born that way.

The rest of Proverbs 22:15 gives an exhortation to parents: "The rod of correction will drive it [foolishness] far from him." Discipline is viewed here as positive, as it will drive the foolishness out of a child. The rod represents parental authority and discipline. We train them by using biblical discipline, not control. Note what Christian author H. A. Ironside says:

To leave a child to itself is to ensure its ruin, for folly is bound up in its heart. Discipline, properly administered will correct the natural tendency to go astray. The rod is, of course, not necessarily strictly such. Corporal punishment is not always required, and might at times be very unwise. But firm, yet kindly, discipline is what the passage declares the importance of. The rod, throughout Scripture, speaks of authority and power; in this case that parental restraint to which the child owes so much. It was the lack of this that was responsible in large measure for the evil ways of both Absalom and Adonijah (2 Sam. 14; 1 Kings 1:6).³

Self-Examination 2

Proverbs provides a picture of a child's lack of maturity and need for training. Next to each characteristic in the list of immaturity (foolishness), write your child's name that applies.

They lack judgment (10:21). _____

They enjoy foolishness (10:23). _____

They are gullible (14:15). _____

They avoid the wise (15:12). _____

They go their own way (15:21). _____

They lash out when discovered in folly (17:12). _____

They are endangered by their words (18:6-7). _____

They are proud and haughty (21:24). _____

They walk a troublesome path (22:5). _____

They cause strife and quarrels (22:10). _____

They have a propensity for laziness (22:13). _____

They are lustful (22:14). _____

They are greedy (22:16). _____

They despise good advice (23:9). _____

They must be guided by hardship at times (26:3). _____

They make truth useless (26:7). _____

They repeat their folly (26:11). _____

They persist in foolishness (27:22). _____

They trust in themselves (28:26). _____

They stir up anger (29:8). _____

They vent their anger (29:11). _____

What Training Is

The proper trainer's goal is to fulfill God's will, not our own desires or expectations. Jesus carried out the Father's will (John 5:20, 30; 6:38) by training His disciples, and we are to do the same. Jesus's motivation was to glorify the Father (John 12:28), as we also should when training our children. If this is our motivation, then we will carry out God's purposes in parenting with love and patience (especially with strong-willed children).

FACT FILE

Training—To cause to grow as desired; to make or become prepared or skilled.⁴

If you had a two-year-old tree in your backyard with a trunk about three inches in diameter that had a forty-five degree bend on it, it would be foolish to grab the tree and forcibly straighten it up in one try. The tree would snap at the base, and you would destroy it.

A trainer, like a farmer (which means "husbandman"⁵), knows that when he finds a bent trunk, there is a proper way and an improper way to fix it. The proper way would be to train the tree by putting a light amount of consistent pressure in a predetermined direction. As the tree conforms to the pressure, more can be gradually applied in the same direction until the tree is in a desired position—and no longer bent.

That is the way we need to perceive our kids: they come to us bent. But we do not like them bent. We want them straight *right now*. Because they are "bent," or acting their age, we say things like, "Don't act that way!" and send the wrong message.

God gives us biblical instruction to understand our job and our mindset toward training. We can see that failure and foolishness in our children is to be expected, and is *normal*, merely a part of the whole journey.

In volume 3, lesson 1, we learned from 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." "Bring them up" means to "bring up to maturity." This is our goal. We are instilling character in our children's lives

as we train them. Proper “training” or discipline is how we carry out the goal. Lastly, “admonition of the Lord” explains that we must do this as the Lord instructs—according to the will of God—not according to our will.

Instilling character is like training muscles.

Imagine you are a coach and your children are the members of your team. The goal is to get them bench-pressing two hundred pounds. If they arrived ten minutes late the first day, and you spent half of your time lecturing them, what did you do toward training their muscles? What if you yelled and screamed and threatened to take away everything they had? Still nothing. Until they start bench presses with lighter weight, no training takes place.

Discipline means training them, and every time they fail it is our opportunity to train them. Their foolish choices and acts provide those opportunities. We need to have a biblical perspective toward our children’s foolish behavior—to view it as our opportunity to discipline and train them to maturity—not to get angry or frustrated.

If you put two hundred pounds on your ten-year-old child’s chest, would you yell, “Pick it up, what’s wrong with you? Come on, you should be able to do this”? Of course not. That ten-year-old cannot bench-press two hundred pounds. Likewise, we need to view their failures or foolishness as a sign that training is not yet complete. If we become angry and aggravated, we are sending the message that we expect a child to accomplish the impossible. We also communicate that they are not valuable to us, we don’t like them, or something is wrong with them. How do you think those types of hurtful expressions will affect your relationship with your child? And if things are not handled properly at a young age, it only gets worse.

We know training begins with lighter weights, gradually increasing as the person demonstrates the capacity to lift more until eventually they achieve the goal. In a similar way, a child’s character grows slightly with each correction. When we shout, act disappointed, and get upset, it is our own ignorance and sin nature. A child’s failure merely proves that they cannot bench-press two hundred pounds yet. They do not have the character yet. That’s the difference.

God wants us to have His viewpoint. It changes our concepts, methods, and attitude about discipline. It can eliminate anger, rebellion, and the perception that a child’s failure is unacceptable. Foolishness is bound up in the hearts of our children. Praise the Lord for telling us this truth and showing us that our task is to instill mature character.

Self-Examination 3

What has your attitude been when your child breaks a rule or disobeys?

What is the attitude God wants you to have when your child disobeys?

Write a prayer asking God to help you change your perspective to His.

Lesson 2

Mature Character

Many parents do not understand the nature of a mature adult. To instill mature character in our children, we must first formulate a definition of maturity. What is our goal?

Self-Examination 1

Write what you believe is the character of a mature adult.

If married, did your spouse write a similar description? ___ Yes ___ No

The ultimate mature adult, with perfect character, was Jesus Christ. *His* is the maturity level we are to seek. The church is called to equip the saints (Ephesians 4:11–12) with this goal in mind: “Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect [mature] man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (verse 13).

This is our goal, and when Christ returns we will be perfect and mature. “We know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him” (1 John 3:2). Until then, we continue to grow into His image (Romans 8:29).

FACT FILE

Perfect or mature—Teleios (Greek). A goal, or purpose; finished, that which has reached its end, term, limit; hence, complete, full, wanting in nothing.⁶

All of us must go through the same process, from childhood to adulthood. Luke 2:52 states that “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” Jesus increased in wisdom (mental growth) and stature (physical growth). He grew in favor with God (spiritual growth) and in favor with men (social growth). We have limited influence in the physical growth of our children. But we have a big part in the other three: mental, spiritual, and social. It is not by accident that these characteristics are mentioned about Jesus; they are for our instruction. God wants our children to grow in these areas.

We want to say of our children, as Paul said of himself, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Corinthians 13:11). He noticed in his own life that there was a progression. Through godly discipline and training, we will see our children gradually put away childish things and grow into mature adults.

Mature Character Defined

Three character qualities must be developed to aim at and hit the bull’s-eye of maturity. They work in unison to produce mature character.

1. Morals and values
2. Personal responsibility
3. Self-control



Morals and Values

First, we must instill biblical morals and values into our children to give them a foundation of knowing right from wrong. Every day they are bombarded with worldly morals and values through the media, public schools, and their peers.

We've already examined the importance of discipling our children and instilling God's Word in their hearts. We are to follow Jesus's example as He prayed to the Father for His own disciples:

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.
(John 17:17)

You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:32)

FACT FILE

Morals—What is right and wrong from God's perspective.

Values—The principles or actions you live by. Your behavior shows what you value most.

Righteousness—Right standing with God.

Once our children are disciplined in the truths of Scripture, they will have the freedom of knowing what is contrary to the Word of God and what results from disobedience. They will be able to discern truth from error and recognize temptations from the world, the flesh, and Satan.

Our children *will* question biblical morals and values, and we must firmly stand for what God says is right and wrong—not offer opinions or worldly philosophies. When the Bible says something is right or wrong, we should never compromise.

God instructed our father of the faith, Abraham, regarding his children:

For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.
(Genesis 18:19)

God told Abraham to structure his house so his children would be righteous and follow the way of the Lord. Abraham's training was to draw his children into right thinking and right behavior in God's eyes. This describes the process of growing in wisdom and favor with God. We increasingly understand what is pleasing to Him and do it.

Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. (2 Corinthians 5:9)

Remember, we disciple our children by our example, instruction, and Bible study. Review lessons 6–10 in volume 3 as needed.

Personal Responsibility

Second, the quality of personal responsibility is instilled in a child by training and persistent biblical discipline. The graph in lesson 1 shows the percentage and progression of choices we make for our children from birth to adulthood. Everyone comes into this world completely dependent, but we must learn to make responsible choices for ourselves. It is sad and difficult to watch a youth who has not learned personal responsibility, and it is often evident that they are immature due to lack of training at home.

If you are faithful in training, your children will develop to a point where less discipline is needed, and you will be rewarded by their growing maturity.

FACT FILE

Personal responsibility—The ability to take care of oneself; to follow through on things you have committed to do or the things required without anyone else prompting you; taking ownership, being accountable and accepting responsibility for your actions.

Self-Examination 2

List two behaviors for each of your children that show personal responsibility. (Examples: I do not need to ask them to make the bed, clean their room, take out the trash, or do their homework.)

List two indications of irresponsibility for each child. (Example: I keep asking them to . . .)

Training a child is progressive, and new challenges will appear with each new stage of their development. One major issue with youth is not wanting to admit to being wrong. When children become teenagers, they often inherit superior wisdom—in their own minds—and think they know it all. When confronted about something, they blame someone else, come up with excuses, and avoid being personally responsible. To overcome this, we must structure our homes as a training ground, not as a debating or negotiating courtroom.

Most children are the same. Blame shifting and avoiding responsibility was the first tactic used by Adam and Eve after they sinned by disobeying God. Back in the garden of Eden, God stated that “of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat” (Genesis 2:16–17). Adam and Eve were personally responsible to obey this one command. Satan came to Eve and tempted her to eat the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:1–5). She ate it and then gave it to her husband, and they both fell into sin by disobeying God (verse 6). When God confronted Adam and Eve about their sin, this is how they responded:

Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

And the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:12–13)

Notice how Adam blamed God by saying, “The woman ... You gave ... me,” and the woman blamed the serpent by saying, “The serpent deceived me.” They were avoiding personal responsibility for their sin. Instead of taking ownership of their actions and being accountable before God, they shifted blame.

If we are not mindful, our children can develop a habit of blaming circumstances, or others, to escape responsibility for their actions. Children will naturally want to blame a sibling: “He did it.” “She made me do it.” “It’s his fault, not mine.” Correct biblical discipline will help a child learn personal responsibility to *take* responsibility.

Instilling personal responsibility into a child takes consistent training, time, and patience. We must model this before our children, showing them by example. Our personal lives can display personal responsibility by the way we tend to our homes, jobs, possessions, and commitments.

Self-Examination 3

How do you think it affects a fifteen-year-old child when their Christian parent gets angry, uses hurtful words, or ignores them as part of their discipline plan, and then never takes responsibility for the sinful actions?

Parents can show irresponsibility by being late to work or by a messy house because no one is keeping it clean. How have you been irresponsible in front of your children? Write an example.

Our homes are the best training ground to prepare children for the work force and life. The principle of personal responsibility is that of maintaining good works. Parents have the awesome privilege of training their children to have a good work ethic. For most children, doing chores and wanting to help around the house is not a priority. Without proper training, their childish character will continue into adulthood. One of the main reasons so many young adults today make poor employees is because they were not trained in personal responsibility and to do a good job.

When Paul wrote to Titus, a pastor he had trained on the island of Crete, he was concerned with the body of believers maintaining good works.

And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful. (Titus 3:14)

Notice that he was writing to Titus about a congregation, yet he called them “our people.” Paul felt that he and Titus were personally responsible to train people to maintain good works and meet other’s needs, and therefore be fruitful. *To maintain good works* means “to be a responsible person, concerned for others, and able to do what is needed.” Our children need a lot of help with this. They are born without the character of personal responsibility, are selfish, and do not care for others. One author says concerning this verse:

Titus was to teach the other Christians (our people) to show hospitality, to care for the sick and afflicted, and to be generous toward those who were in need. Instead of working merely to meet their own needs and wants, they should have the distinctly Christian vision of earning money in order to share with the less privileged (see Eph. 4:28b). This would save them from the misery of selfishness and the tragedy of a wasted, unfruitful life.⁷

An exhortation of what needs to be done within the church family, this also is what we should be striving for within our homes. We can teach our children to be personally responsible—if we know how. When doing this we are honoring God, exalting His name, and blessing our children.

DIG DEEPER

Describe how this verse applies to parenting.

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Colossians 3:17)

For the following Scriptures, describe how personal responsibility is involved and what the fruit is from having it.

He who has a slack hand becomes poor,
But the hand of the diligent makes rich. (Proverbs 10:4)

A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth,
And the recompense of a man's hands will be rendered to him. (Proverbs 12:14)

The hand of the diligent will rule,
But the lazy man will be put to forced labor. (Proverbs 12:24)

The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting,
But diligence is man's precious possession. (Proverbs 12:27)

The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing;
But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich. (Proverbs 13:4)

In all labor there is profit,
But idle chatter leads only to poverty. (Proverbs 14:23)

The way of the lazy man is like a hedge of thorns,
But the way of the upright is a highway. (Proverbs 15:19)

The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty,
But those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty. (Proverbs 21:5)

The desire of the lazy man kills him,
For his hands refuse to labor. (Proverbs 21:25)

He covets greedily all day long,
But the righteous gives and does not spare. (Proverbs 21:26)

Do you see a man who excels in his work?
He will stand before kings;
He will not stand before unknown men. (Proverbs 22:29)

He who tills his land will have plenty of bread,
But he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough! (Proverbs 28:19)

Self-Control

The third character quality our children must develop is self-control, including the ability to self-discipline (to manage one’s feelings and actions). Self-control is essential to living successfully according to godly morals and values.

The significance is clear. Making moral, biblical choices requires self-control to stand firm and not take the path of least resistance or be led by the flesh. God’s will for us is to be under the power of the Holy Spirit—emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

FACT FILE

Self-control—The ability to govern oneself emotionally, physically, and spiritually; the ability to not always yield to the path of least resistance.

Self-control includes having the ability to resist one’s emotions. Sometimes we react to people and circumstances with sinful behaviors. In volume 2, lesson 3, we examined the difference between reacting and responding. A reaction indicates lack of self-control, which is fleshly; but a godly response is motivated by love, which is a fruit of the Spirit. When we react to our emotional impulses, we often follow through with physical sinful actions.

DIG DEEPER

Describe how this proverb relates to the emotional aspect of self-control.

A fool vents all his feelings,
But a wise man holds them back. (Proverbs 29:11)

Self-Examination 4

Describe an incident when you let emotions get in the way, which resulted in sinful behavior toward someone.

DIG DEEPER

Describe the consequences of a lack of self-control.

Whoever has no rule over his own spirit
Is like a city broken down, without walls. (Proverbs 25:28)

You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.
(2 Peter 3:17)

Peter said we must have self-control, but without proper training and a desire to attain it, we will not acquire it.

So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. (1 Peter 1:13 NLT)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.
(Galatians 5:22–23)

What does this verse promise all God's children?

Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6)

In his book *The Believer's Secret to Holiness*, Andrew Murray says:

Self-control in a Christian means that instead of insisting on having our own way, we choose God's way; we turn to Him for our marching orders and we obey His loving commands. We agree to allow God's Holy Spirit to live in us and work God's will through us. Then, when the Spirit has free reign, He is able to bring us closer to God's ideal of perfection, and holiness.⁸

These three character qualities—morals and values, personal responsibility, and self-control—are our target, the bull's-eye we want to hit dead center. Every foolish act your son or daughter has done to date, and will do in the future, involves a violation of one or more of these. Because they were born without them. It is our job as parents to teach and instill them through training.

We must understand this. Having no clear bull's-eye means having no direction, and we will end up in a place we don't want to be. Having clarity also brings unity between husbands and wives, helping them work together toward a clear, common goal.

Self-Examination 5

Without clear goals and a plan to reach them, how do we measure our success?

If a corporation wants to sell three million dollars of products in a twelve-month period, it would be wise to have a clear plan and quarterly checks to determine how close they are to that mark. It would be reckless and irresponsible to wait until the end of the year to measure success. Likewise, if you have clear goals and methods for training up your children, you can measure your success. In a later lesson you will learn how to implement a process for you and your children to see how close you are to your goals.

Our Kids Need to Know the Bull's-Eye

By the time I was fourteen years old, my distorted view of manhood included being a tough guy, using drugs, drinking, and having many girlfriends. I foolishly went after all that. I trusted no one who could tell me otherwise. No one ever gave me that bull's-eye of character or encouraged me to shoot for it.

I have interviewed hundreds of teenagers over the years, and less than 5 percent come close to giving the proper definition of a mature adult. When asked *when* they should know, most respond with, "I don't know." When asked if it just happens or is something they must do, they often answered, "When you move out, I guess, or when you get a job, start taking care of yourself, or maybe when you get married and have kids."

This generation of teenagers is lost because a godless world is defining the wrong bull's-eye. Public schools, media, music, TV, internet, books, magazines, and influencers are forming the wrong bull's-eye. Satan is bombarding our children with lies, confusion, and misdirection.

You may not have been taught the importance of instilling these characteristics, but the Bible is clear. God desires our children to acquire morals and values, personal responsibility, and self-control. Parents must define both the goals for maturity and the methods to get them there. It will take a combination of discipleship and discipline (training).

Two Principles at Work

For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. (Proverbs 23:7)

"As he thinks in his heart" means what a person believes about right and wrong. "So is he" refers to a person's behavior, or what he does, which can be said to define who he is. Most parents are more interested in changing the "so is he," their child's behavior, and less focused on training the

heart. But there are two principles at work in this verse. “As he thinks in his heart” comes before “so is he.” Therefore the priority must be to disciple our children, which will affect their behavior. We must change the way our child thinks—and discipline their behavior.

If your son calls his sister a hurtful name, you need to follow through with a corrective consequence for his behavior, but you also need to teach his heart by discipling him in the knowledge of right and wrong. The Word of God teaches us how to treat others, and we must faithfully disciple our children in these truths.

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. (Ephesians 4:29)

By hearing the Word of God, a child becomes schooled, or disciplined, in understanding right and wrong. This would not be complete after a one-time lesson. The principle of not letting corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth includes how to talk to one another. A combination of discipleship and discipline teaches personal responsibility and the knowledge that a choice to disobey always has a corrective consequence.

Lesson 3

Why Discipline?

Training children according to biblical principles applies to all families, including two-parent and single-parent homes. And, when married, a couple is to function as a team. Both are responsible for discipling and training the children, although fathers have the primary leadership role. In volume 3, lesson 1, we studied God's standard for training and disciplining children:

And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training [discipline] and admonition [instruction] of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)

That is God's goal and therefore should be ours as well. In the last lesson, we learned that progress is measured by observing a child's improvement in the areas of morals and values, personal responsibility, and self-control.

Discipline is a planned process covering all aspects of training a child, including discipling in righteousness and instilling mature character. In New Testament times, the Greek culture was attentive to the discipline of children. When writing Ephesians 6:4, Paul used the Greek word *paideia*, translated "training or discipline," from the word *pais* (child), referring to the systematic training of children. This indicates correction for wrongdoing, further explained in a proverb: "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly" (Proverbs 13:24).⁹ As defined in a theological dictionary, training "also denotes the upbringing and handling of the child which is growing up to maturity and needing direction, teaching, instruction and a certain measure of compulsion in the form of discipline or even chastisement."¹⁰

FACT FILE

The Goal—"Bring them up," *ektrepho* (Greek), means to bring our children to maturity.

The Method—God discipline uses to mature and train His children.

Admonition or instruction—*Nouthesia* (Greek), from Ephesians 6:4, translates as a "warning, exhortation, or any word of encouragement or reproof, which leads to correct behavior."¹¹

This refers to having a corrective influence on someone through verbal instruction, leading to increased understanding of proper conduct. For our purposes, all instruction is to be "of the Lord." Our desire must be to instruct in God's way. We are doing God's will by instilling godly character in our children using God's method of discipline.

Why Parents Must Discipline Their Children

1. God commands us to discipline.

Discipline your son while there is hope,
And do not desire his death. (Proverbs 19:18 NASB)

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

Do not hold back discipline from the child,
Although you strike him with the rod, he will not die.
You shall strike him with the rod
And rescue his soul from Sheol. (Proverbs 23:13–14 NASB)

Discipline is the Hebrew word *yasar*, an imperative verb, which means it is a command. God is exhorting us to discipline our children from the earliest possible age. This verse indicates that a child who is left undisciplined can reach a point beyond parental influence and will not have the self-control to say no to sin, which could result in spiritual and even physical death.

Fathers, did you hear the strong exhortation and consequences if this is not taking place in your home?

2. Discipline demonstrates God's love.

For the Lord disciplines those he loves,
and he punishes each one he accepts as his child. (Hebrews 12:6 NLT)

Just as God disciplines us because He loves us, so we should discipline our children because we love them. Discipline is a form of love.

Have you viewed discipline toward your children as love? ___ Yes ___ No

If a parent is angry, agitated, or threatening when disciplining, would a child perceive it as love?
___ Yes ___ No

Many kids in juvenile hall have told me in anger, "I know my parents don't love me!" Their parents didn't necessarily abandon them, beat them, introduce them to drugs, or move from place to place. These kids were convinced their parents didn't love them because they did not discipline them. A child knows when a parent neglects them, doesn't take the time and effort to teach them right from wrong, fails to correct and train them, doesn't enforce rules, and doesn't discipline them. These speak loud and clear that a parent does not care and does not love them.

3. Discipline produces mature, godly adults.

As we learned from Ephesians 6:4, we raise our children to maturity through discipline.

Consider the horse (or mule), which is trained and guided with a bit and bridle because they lack the ability to understand. In a similar way our children must be guided by discipline until they gain understanding. Thankfully a child schooled with biblical discipline is given the best opportunity to someday not need that "bit and bridle" of parental discipline but can be an independently responsible adult.

Do not be like the horse or like the mule,
Which have no understanding,
Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle,
Else they will not come near you. (Psalm 32:9)

Consider how many people over eighteen years of age reject authority and do not take responsibility for their actions. Our jails and prisons are full of them.

As parents, we sometimes discipline our children by reacting to their “foolish” behavior, forgetting that the goal of discipline is to raise mature adults. Mere age does not make an adult. Rather, maturity is characterized by morals and values, personal responsibility, and self-control. It is evident in our society that many individuals come of age and are not yet mature adults.

4. Discipline keeps peace in the home.

For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.
(Hebrews 12:11 ESV)

When proper discipline is consistently administered, it will yield peaceable fruit. Any home with children is a daily hotbed of excitement, noise, accidents, tears, hectic schedules, and countless unexpected events. But, as Christians, our homes can be a place where God’s peace reigns.

Would you describe your home environment as peaceful, calm, harmonious, and unified?
___ Yes ___ No

Tools of Discipline

A man and woman join in marriage, each with their own histories and preconceived ideas of discipline. They often approach discipline with the same processes their parents used and then add current trends or suggestions from family members and friends. Eventually the resulting confusion leads to division between husband and wife.

But this is not the way God designed the family to function. The Bible says, “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace” (1 Corinthians 14:33). While we may gain some ideas about discipline from other sources, they must be in line with God’s Word, the truth that instructs us in the ways of righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16–17). God is the source of information, the provider of biblical principles—tools—for disciplining *His* children *His* way. And the Bible warns us that His ways are not our natural ways. God says, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). So we must continually be in His Word to follow His instruction.

It is easy to lose our perspective and lapse into incorrect, self-motivated practices and attitudes with our children. But the truth is, they are *His* children. This principle is so important. Proverbs shows us that even the ways that seem “right” to us can end in disaster.

DIG DEEPER

Explain how parents can be deceived and describe the possible result.

There is a way that seems right to a man,
But its end is the way of death. (Proverbs 14:12)

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes,
But the Lord weighs the hearts. (Proverbs 21:2)

Remember the Foundation

Before we learn God's tools to build mature character, we must have a solid understanding of the proper sequence for training our children. First, we disciple them in righteousness. Second, we instill biblical discipline.

Discipling must be the foundation for discipline. "For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Until the heart is transformed, the behavior may be learned, but true righteousness cannot exist. As we learned in the last lesson, many parents spend most of their time trying to change the "so is he," or the behavior, rather than the heart. The heart is changed through love and discipleship. But if you discipline without love, you will produce rebellion rather than obedience.

Review volume 3, lessons 6–9 for details on discipleship in the home.

DIG DEEPER

Describe what these verses say about a man's heart and his actions.

As in water face reflects face,
So a man's heart reveals the man. (Proverbs 27:19)

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries,
fornications, murders. (Mark 7:21)

Keep your heart with all diligence,
For out of it spring the issues of life. (Proverbs 4:23)

Follow His Example

Ephesians 6:4 ends with the phrase, “admonition of the Lord,” which is an exhortation for us to look to Him and His Word and to follow the example of how He trains and disciplines us. Hebrews shows us what our attitudes and responses should be to God’s discipline, and it shows that He loves us and that His motives are only for our good.

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:
 “My son, do not despise the chastening [discipline] of the Lord,
 Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;
 For whom the Lord loves He chastens,
 And scourges every son whom He receives.” (Hebrews 12:5–6)

God’s Word is the standard for right and wrong behavior. Adults use Scripture to guide and correct themselves. In the same way, parents need to define, develop, and communicate biblical rules of conduct for the family, complete with a plan for corrective discipline when necessary. The important principles from these verses help parents develop a clear plan for “chastening” and “scourging” their children.

God uses a measured amount of pain to motivate us to accept His training so we may be conformed into the image of Christ. In a similar way, we are to do the same with our children to motivate them to accept our training.

Our task as parents is threefold:

1. Define rules based on God’s view of right and wrong behavior.
2. Have a plan for correction (consequences) when a rule is broken.
3. Use punishment to help a child receive the corrective consequence (if they are refusing it). This would be used for rebellion.

FACT FILE

Chastening or discipline—Paideia (Greek). Used in Ephesians 6:4, means correction or training. There is a consequence for every offense; some type of training/correction will follow.

Rebuke—To convict, to prove one in the wrong.¹²

Scourges—All and any suffering, which God ordains for His children, which is always designed for their good. Includes the entire range of trials and tribulations, which He providentially ordains and which work to mortify sin and nurture faith.¹³

DIG DEEPER

Explain God’s motive for correcting His children.

For whom the Lord loves He corrects,
 Just as a father the son in whom he delights. (Proverbs 3:12)

Self-Examination

How does this differ from your current motives?

List some unloving attitudes, facial expressions, or words you have used during discipline that need to be changed.

Remember the words of Jesus:

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.
(Revelation 3:19)

The next lesson presents the four tools of training in this spirit of love.

Lesson 4

Four Tools of Training

The tools to build personal responsibility and self-control can be divided into four categories:

1. Rules
2. Corrective consequences
3. Punishment
4. Consistency

Tool 1: Rules

Rules must be clearly defined.

First, we must establish boundaries, or rules, that are written. These give a child security and stability. Parents may think their kids know the rules, but most are mistaken.

In counseling, I ask parents to tell me the rules, and then I bring the children into the room. They usually explain more rules than their parents did. Why the difference? When either parent is upset, they often say something like, “If you ever do that again, such and such will happen.” Later the parents forget what they say in the heat of anger—but the kids do not. Rules need to be clearly written out. God gives us a great example to follow.

So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. (Deuteronomy 4:13)

God wrote His commandments on stone. He knew we needed something written down. He governs the whole world with just these ten rules. But most homes can get away with fewer rules.

Rules must be written for the following reasons:

1. Written rules reduce confusion for both parents and children alike. If anybody in leadership, whether in the work force, government, or church, does not articulate his expectations to those under his authority, he will surely fail. Clearly stated rules and boundaries define the desired behaviors and indicate when a corrective consequence will be implemented. For example, you have a written rule: “Clean up your own messes.” Your child makes a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, leaving the jars out and a knife smeared with jelly stuck to the countertop. Clearly a violation of the rule. When children fail, they need corrective consequences, which is the second tool of training.
2. Written rules build and maintain unity between parents, promoting team spirit. Unwritten rules are as confusing and divisive for husbands and wives as for the children. When parents agree on the rules, they are motivated to support each other when a rule is broken. Children will try to manipulate one parent to not follow through on a rule. However, when you stay unified and stick to the plan, it promotes maturity in the child and blesses the marriage.

3. Written rules eliminate double-mindedness and unfairness. Parents frequently make the mistake of giving the youngest child, or “baby” of the family, unfair mercy compared to older children. Without written rules and predetermined corrective consequences, parents may act differently toward a more challenging child than they do toward a compliant child. The challenging child will begin to perceive that the parent loves their sibling more. When the rules are written, and the corrective consequence for breaking the rules is predetermined and equally enforced, most unfairness will be eliminated. This includes neglecting parental discipline due to physical and emotional factors such as illness, tiredness, or stress, which can and will be exploited by children, resulting in unclear and unfair circumstances.
4. Written rules maintain consistency. Parents and children are more inclined to follow through if a rule is written down. This is challenging for many parents because it requires persistence over the years. Many couples start strong with this principle but slowly slip back into old habits. And the chaos returns. If parents do not make changes, stay accountable, and remain consistent, how can they expect to train their kids to live responsible, self-controlled lives?

~~ACTION PLAN~~

Describe how your parents disciplined you. Then describe the rules and consequences you currently enforce in your home. If married, write your lists separately and then compare.

If your children are over eight years old, ask them to give you their version of the rules. How does it compare to your list? Discuss as a couple.

Tool 2: Corrective Consequences

Corrective consequences are like vegetables. Most kids don't like them, but they are vital to good health. Kids may tell you they don't like rules and consequences, but they know in their hearts that they need them.

Throughout Scripture, God clearly communicates that there are conditions for blessings and consequences for disobedience. God gives man freedom to choose for himself. It is a simple principle. Even before sin entered the world, God established the principle of a rule and the consequence for breaking it.

FACT FILE

Consequence—That which follows after breaking a rule. To implement an effective rule, there must be a corrective consequence for breaking that rule.

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”
(Genesis 2:16–17)

The rule given to Adam was “You shall not eat” of that one tree, and the consequence was “You shall . . . die” if you do. When Adam and Eve broke this rule, they both suffered consequences. And many more consequences resulted from breaking that rule.

God continued this principle when He gave His law:

Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse [consequence], if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God.
(Deuteronomy 11:26–28)

The law—God’s rules—were the commandments given to Moses, and he wrote them down. They are found in the Old Testament books of Exodus through Deuteronomy, including the Ten Commandments. God always indicates that obedience brings blessing, and disobedience results in judgment, or correction, sometimes called a curse. The blessings and curses are expounded upon in Deuteronomy 27–28.

God provided written rules to help the children of Israel stay in proper relationship with Him, others, the world, and cultures around them. He had their best interest in mind, and Moses’s writings made God’s will clear. Unfortunately, most of the Israelites headed through the desert to the promised land, rebelled repeatedly, and suffered the consequences. God let them wander the desert for forty years until they died, and then their children were led into the land.

The principle is clear: you break a rule, you have a consequence.

Just as our discipline plan has predetermined rules, we must have predetermined consequences for correction when a rule is broken. We must give our children clear boundaries. If they cross them, we must apply discipline in the form of a corrective consequence. We can view their failures as an opportunity for training, a positive experience, as we remember this is love. This principle is illustrated in sports. Consider football. If you step out of bounds, you have broken a rule. You cannot apologize to the referee and expect him to excuse you from the consequence. Rather, the referee is going to proceed with the corrective consequence for that infraction by marking the ball down where you stepped out. It is not negotiable. Arguing or claiming it was an accident will not change the predetermined consequence. The consequences inform and motivate the players to discipline themselves to stay within the boundaries.

Likewise, corrective consequences should be predetermined and not decided in the moment. Suppose your rule is “No jumping on the couch.” One morning you walk by the living room and out of the corner of your eye you see your little seven-year-old, the compliant child, jumping on the couch. You think to yourself, *I don’t want to deal with that right now. I haven’t had my coffee yet.* In passing, you simply say, “Stop that right now.”

Once you have had coffee, you are feeling much better. It is time to get ready for church and you are rushing everyone to get ready. You see your nine-year-old, the strong-willed child, jumping on the couch. Instead of just saying “Stop” like you did before, you continue with “I have told you so many times not to jump on that couch!” Then you spank or impose further punishment.

That was not a predetermined consequence. That was spontaneous, emotional parenting. The consequence was based on how you felt at the moment—not on a loving, planned process. This type of emotional parenting creates jealousy between siblings and can convince a strong-willed child, who will naturally receive more consequences, that parents love them less. It also exasperates them and can push them toward a rebellious heart.

Self-Examination

Identify the inconsistencies in your home when disciplining your children.

Tool 3: Punishment

Punishment is part of the overall discipline plan, but it is different from a corrective consequence. Punishment motivates a child to yield to parental authority and accept the corrective consequence.

FACT FILE

Punishment—A measured amount of pain to motivate, or the infliction of a penalty.

Read that description of punishment again. Do you see any reference to anger, yelling, cussing, disgust, judging, comparing, ignoring, or pouting? Many of us have found ourselves believing that discipline will not work unless we are angry and raise our voices. That is a worldly philosophy and has no place in Christian homes. Every aspect of discipline must be done in love, because love is the most powerful motivator—not anger.

For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. (James 1:20)

Many parents have difficulty administering punishment and need to consider God’s instructions.

Do not withhold correction from a child,
For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die.
You shall beat him with a rod,
And deliver his soul from hell. (Proverbs 23:13–14)

This verse often generates confusion. God is not telling parents to beat a child with an implement. Rather, it is an idiom in which the rod represents two things: a measuring tool and authority.

God is telling us that sometimes people need to experience pain to mature or learn to yield to authority. He is *not* telling you to grab a stick and beat your child into submission. You must take the whole Word of God as His counsel. God's Word is not contrary to itself.

DIG DEEPER

Describe what this verse means to you as a parent.

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

The word *chastening* here is the same Greek word (*paideia*) used in Ephesians 6:4, which indicates training or discipline. When you read this passage in context, Hebrews 12:3–11, you notice the comparison between how a father administers pain in the discipline process and how God does. God says if you are without chastening, you are not His son. I pray that you have felt the loving hand of God's correction when you have sinned. That means you are His.

When it comes to carrying out discipline in the form of punishment or pain, you may have heard the saying, "This is going to hurt me more than it's going to hurt you." Perhaps your parents said it. Punishment is given to a child only if they refuse the corrective consequence that follows the breaking of a rule.

Clearing the Confusion

Spanking my kids often broke my heart and was one of the most difficult things I ever had to do as a daddy. It was hard for me to follow through with our youngest, but I had to do it, because she was testing my authority by refusing to do the corrective consequence.

Some parents say they don't believe in spanking. But God's Word says if a child will not yield to our authority and training, we need to find a way to motivate them. You may have had parents who beat you within an inch of your life, or they never spanked you at all. What they did was wrong and should not dictate your obedience to God's Word. If you do not find a way to motivate your child to receive corrective consequences, Scripture says you will pay dearly later.

I have worked with parents long enough to see the same strong-willed three-year-old, whose parents didn't believe in spanking, turn into a fourteen-year-old who engaged his father in a fistfight and was involved in other irresponsible, rebellious behaviors. If a child is unwilling to accept the consequence, then we must find a way to get them to yield and accept it. When you have been blessed with a strong-willed child, they must be motivated often.

Some parents do not want to punish, fearing it will affect the child's psyche when pain is administered. Any form of punishment done wrong *is wrong* and can cause emotional scars to a child. But pain is part of God's overall plan in life. For example, when I was eleven years old, I was a daredevil. My friends and I used to jump flights of stairs on our bikes. When we finally mastered one flight, we had to try two flights. But I crashed, tearing up my knees and bending both wheels. I was in serious pain, but I rode home, fixed the tires, and was on my bike again the next day. I did not go back to jump both sets of stairs again because I did not want to repeat that pain.

When I see someone on a bicycle now, I do not have a flashback of when I hurt myself. I have not developed emotional trauma. That is what worldly wisdom has led us to believe will happen if we use spanking as a motivation. Pain is a good thing, a part of life that teaches us. It taught me to never jump two flights of stairs on my bicycle again. Over the years, pain has taught me in many ways what I can and cannot do.

Certain strong-willed kids need to be motivated. They do not like the idea that you are the authority, and they often want to run the household. But remember, God made them strong-willed. Sometimes they need those motivators to get them to yield to your authority and accept the predetermined corrective consequence.

Spanking will be covered in more detail in lesson 8.

The Process

The predetermined punishment is used in the discipline process to motivate the child. Suppose your rule is "No jumping on the couch," and the predetermined corrective consequence for your five-year-old is a five-minute time-out in a chair. By refusing to sit in the chair until the five-minute timer goes off, your child is choosing the punishment/motivator. After a spanking, put the child back in the chair and restart the timer at five minutes. No anger, no yelling, no threatening. When your child accepts the corrective consequence by sitting for the five minutes, they are accepting personal responsibility for breaking the rule and growing in self-control. When they rebel by not wanting to accept the corrective consequence, they are choosing the punishment.

Many parents do not understand the sequence of corrective consequences and punishment. Learn the proper process: A broken rule causes a corrective consequence. Refusal of the corrective consequence causes a punishment. It is the motivator used to help your child accept corrective consequences—not the consequence itself. Do not lose sight of this truth. Remember, all correction is to be administered with love.

Punishment alone does not train. Over 80 percent of people who are released from prison end up back in prison.¹⁴ The penal system is designed for punishment, not training. The moment they are out and "Big Brother" is off their back, they go right back to their former behavior. Likewise, children who are only punished and not given corrective consequences are not being trained.

Tool 4: Consistency

Consistency will be covered in the next lesson.

Lesson 5

Training without Compromise

We must be consistent if we want to see growth in our children, so this entire chapter is devoted to tool 4, Consistency.

Consider the reason people speed. An honest survey of how many people drive above the speed limit would reveal that virtually everyone speeds at one time or another. One might rationalize that everyone else does or they were late. But the reason people speed is not just lack of self-control—it's the inability of the police department to enforce the rule in every location.

What if a computer chip in our cars recorded if we went one mile an hour over the speed limit? It would report to the police department and automatically mail a speeding ticket. We might suddenly develop self-control because of the consistent corrective consequences.

Kids are no different. Without consistency, there might as well be no rules and no training, which equals no peace. Being consistent will not make our children stop being foolish overnight. Character is instilled each time we give them a consequence for crossing a boundary (breaking a rule). Like a muscle that is exercised, every time it's disciplined (trained), it grows a little stronger.

DIG DEEPER

Describe what this verse means to you as a parent.

Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6)

Consistency can be hard for moms because they are emotional beings. Moms, do not apologize for your emotions, just do not compromise God's will because of them. God did not give you that gift for you to use it improperly. He gave you a nurturing heart, which is good, but you cannot allow emotions to block your obedience to Christ while training your children.

Some dads let offenses slide because discipline is too much trouble, or they avoid confrontation to look like the good guy. Do not grow weary—follow through. Your children need you.

God's view of discipline is love in action. Inconsistent discipline can teach a child that manipulation is possible and everything is negotiable. Worse than producing manipulative kids would be them repeating that behavior in marriage and the work force. Learn to be supportive of each other as husband and wife, and pray for each other. Ask God to help both of you to be consistently obedient to Him in this area.

Counting

Some parents use counting as part of the consequence process. “Stop doing that! I’m going to count to three, and you’d better stop!” But counting is a destructive component of the training process. Strong-willed kids cannot stand the idea that the parent is the boss. When told not to do something, they think, *I’ve got to win here. I’ve got to show them I’m in control.*

A strong-willed child will approach a forbidden object, make sure Mom is watching, then reach out and come ever so close to touching it. Once she says, “Don’t you dare; don’t you touch that,” the child has her full attention. Then she continues with, “I’m going to start counting. One . . . You’d better get . . . two . . . two and a half . . . I’m telling you!” By this time her veins are popping out and she’s ready to explode. Then the child walks away and thinks, *See, I really am in control. I made her look and got her angry.*

Counting can become a destructive tool if used as part of the training method and can provoke strong-willed children to continue to try and rule. Instead, Mom could merely say, “Get away from that, *now.*” If they do not immediately move away, they get a corrective consequence. Follow through is the key. If the behavior is not dealt with right away, it will get out of hand when they become teenagers.

When Adam and Eve sinned, God did not begin counting as they stood next to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. He issued the rule with a predetermined corrective consequence (Genesis 2:17) and then followed through with the corrective consequence when they disobeyed (Genesis 3). Even though Adam and Eve both made excuses (Genesis 3:9–13), even blaming God (verse 12), He just followed through. He did not allow for manipulation.

Rules, Children, and Choices

Years ago, there was a popular game show on television called *Let’s Make A Deal*. The studio audience dressed in wild costumes, hoping to attract the attention of the host and be selected to choose one of three doors on stage. Behind each door was either a great prize or a booby prize. The contestants could go home with a car, a boat, or a can of tuna.

Many kids want to play *Let’s Make A Deal* when it comes to rules and corrective consequences.

Door 1: Follow rules

Door 2: Break rule, accept consequence

Door 3: No rules, no consequences

The three doors represent a typical child’s response to training. We want them to choose the first door and follow our rules. Choosing the second door represents breaking the rule and accepting the corrective consequence for the disobedience. Most kids, especially the strong-willed, want the third door: “I don’t have to accept the rule, and I should not have a corrective consequence.” This is like a driver getting pulled over for speeding, issued a citation, then going to court and fighting the fine. He chose to speed, knows he is guilty, but he doesn’t want to accept the corrective consequence. That is childish behavior. A child learns to accept consequences as parents follow through with proper consistent training, which builds mature character.

Knowing children are not yet mature, and do not naturally take responsibility for their actions, how should we respond when they choose door 3? Shock, anger, screaming, yelling, judging, or becoming frustrated and bitter toward them? Unfortunately, this is how many parents behave. Instead, we must remove door 3 as an option. We must calmly and consistently enforce the written rules and clearly communicate to them that they only have two choices: either accept the rule or break the rule and accept the corrective consequence.

Children who are raised without consistent corrective consequences for their actions become adults who do not take responsibility for their actions. Many parents have unknowingly allowed their children the third option for years, so it is a challenge to retrain themselves and their children to break this ineffective parenting style.

Parents, do yourselves a favor. Cross out door 3. If your kids have been choosing it on a continuous basis, and you have been allowing it, do not be surprised when they continue to ask for it. Explain to them, and show them by day-to-day discipline, that things have changed.

ACTION PLAN 1

Have a family meeting. Explain to your children about these three doors, their choices, and the discipline process of rules, corrective consequences, and punishment. Then, when they start the behavior, simply remind them, “I know you want door 3, don’t you? Remember our meeting? It’s not happening. Accept your consequence or you are choosing a motivator instead.”

Most strong-willed children, like my Nicholas, will choose door 3 whenever possible. Compliant children, like my Justin and Katie, will usually choose between doors 1 and 2. Compliant kids have an inner desire that motivates them to cooperate. It is important to them to please their parents. Strong-willed children, on the other hand, often don’t care as much if a parent is happy or not; they just want to be in control.

Adapting Our Training

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

This is *not* a guarantee but a probability. “The way he should go” means every child is unique in their personality, and some may need more corrective consequences, tighter boundaries, and tougher consequences than others. This verse also means parents must be willing to adapt to each child’s personality or bent.

When Nick was in school, it was typical for us to have two or three teacher conferences each year due to him wanting to do his own thing. We were not surprised to get the call: “Mr. and Mrs. Caster, can you come down to the school? We need to have a meeting about your son Nick.”

When Nick was in third grade, we received one of these calls from his teacher, who was newly married with no children. She began telling us about Nick’s behavior in class. When she was finished, she asked us if we discipline him. We responded, “We sure do.”

But we could tell by her expression she thought we were lying, or that we did not know what we were doing. She ignored what we had said and continued, “It’s really important for parents to set boundaries,” then proceeded to give us advice.

I could tell my wife was getting upset, so I jumped in and said, “Look. I know Nick likes to run everything; it’s his personality. Nick is strong-willed. Yes, we have rules at home. But you just told us this has been going on for several months, and we’re just hearing about it now? Let’s bring Nick in, let’s go over what he’s doing, and let’s agree on a corrective consequence that you can give him here, like picking up trash during lunch or PE. And let’s establish a way you can communicate to us when we pick him up, and then we will follow through with additional corrective consequences at home.”

That was just Nick. If he did not feel like doing math, he would simply interrupt the whole class, shouting out, “Who wants to go out and play?” It was a blessing and relief when he began to redirect that strong will in the right direction during his teen years. But raising him was not always fun.

Two years after Nick, the same teacher got my second son, Justin, the straight-A-people-pleaser, who often wrote little notes on the bottom of his papers like, “I love you. You’re the best teacher.”

At Justin’s sixth grade graduation, the teacher brought each child up and said something nice. When she got to him, this woman began to cry tears of joy, then other women began crying as the men looked at each other with a puzzled “What’s-up?” expression. She gave a five-minute speech about the *wonderfulness* of my son. Justin’s teachers would always ask me, “Where did you get this kid? He’s so good and sweet.”

I would reply, “Don’t you remember two years earlier when you had my other son, Nick?” Same house, same rules, same parents, different children. God is just so wonderful. He has a sense of humor. He gave our children their personalities.

The Black Stallion

I came home from work one day when Nick was around ten years old. He was in his room having a rough day. He had been getting corrective consequences from the time he woke up till the time I came home. He was crying one of those deep, deep cries. I sat next to him and said, “What’s wrong?”

He replied, “Dad, I’m so bad.”

I started to get emotional. “What do you mean, you’re so bad?”

He answered, “I get so many consequences compared to Justin. I’m so bad.”

I sat there, thinking, *God, help me out here*. I wanted to say, “You’re right.” But God quickened my mind and rescued me. Just a few nights earlier, we had watched a movie, *The Black Stallion*. I said, “Nicholas, remember that horse in the movie? They couldn’t put that horse behind a normal fence, could they? A four-foot fence was nothing; he’d just jump it. That horse was a black stallion,

and he was strong-willed. God made it that way. Nick, you're just like the Black Stallion. Yes, you're harder to train, son. Yes, you need more consequences, but think of it as just needing taller fences. I know it's hard on both you and us sometimes, but you are worth it. God gave you this strong will. Your strength and your strong will are a gift from God, and someday you are going to use that strong will to do great things for God."

After we had already named Nicholas, we found out the name means "a leader of people." These strong-willed kids are the Peters and Pauls. I praise the Lord for Nick's strong will. Parents ask me all the time, "Does Nick let you say and write these things about him?"

I respond, "Are you kidding? Nick's a star! He'll even ask you, 'Want me to sign your book?'" Nick is so confident in who he is in Christ. He also knows he was a tool for the Lord. God used him to help transform me into the image of Christ.

I never had to meet with Justin's teachers to set up a consequence for bad behavior to be enforced at home. I never had to set a homework time for Justin. But with Nick, I had to do those things. He was different. He needed the structure because, without it, he ran amuck. He needed us to come alongside him to help in these areas.

Be willing to come alongside your children, without comparing them to sisters or brothers. Each is unique, and if God has blessed you with a strong-willed child, do not look upon it as a genetic dysfunction. Praise God for that child.

ACTION PLAN 2

Write a prayer below, thanking God for the personality of each child. If needed, write an apology for your critical heart.

Use these four tools of training to see God bring about transformation. Failures and mistakes are common; they are our opportunity to train them. Do not take their mistakes personally or forget that it is your job to train your children. The hard part is our lazy flesh, but God will give us the grace to do it correctly *if we desire to*.

Would you intentionally rebel against God? Would you tell Him, “I don’t accept Your plan”? You may not tell Him verbally, but you tell Him by your actions. If God has blessed you with a strong-willed child, be willing to engage and stay consistent and give the extra time and energy it takes. When you get angry and yell, or give up and relinquish your responsibility, you are telling God, “I don’t trust You. You made a mistake. You gave me a task that is beyond Your ability to help me do it correctly.” And that is a serious accusation.

Self-Examination 1

Have any of your actions been saying this to the Lord? If so, write a confession for those actions and ask for His forgiveness.

Train Behaviors—Not Attitudes

Most of us have experienced the attitudes of our children. We often respond, “Don’t you give me that attitude, young lady!” Unfortunately, it is easy to confuse bad attitudes with wrong behaviors. But they are not the same. They must be dealt with differently.

This is a big issue, more for women than men, because God created women to be nurturers. When negative attitudes arise, the temptation for Mom is to follow the child around the house, pleading, “What’s wrong with you?” When the child does not respond with the appropriate change in attitude, the situation can escalate into an argument.

God gives each of us emotions, from joy to anger, excitement to boredom. And each of us experience different emotions in response to the situations around us. Although our behavior is often tied to our emotional state, or attitude, there is a distinct difference. We cannot choose our emotions, but we can adjust our behavior. Children learn to adjust their behavior through loving, proper, consistent discipline.

FACT FILE

Attitude—“A posture or position; a feeling, opinion or mood.”¹⁵

Behavior—“The act or manner of behaving.”¹⁶ It is something that is done or not done, breaking a rule or not doing what is expected.

The psalmist shows the difference between an attitude and a behavior. Psalm 4:4 says, “Be angry, and do not sin.” The attitude is anger—an emotion. The behavior is sin—an action.

Parents, your response to a bad attitude is simply to tell your child, “You can be sad or mad, but if that emotion leads you to kick the wall, that is a behavior that will get you a corrective consequence. You can be angry because I’m the authority, and this is the rule of the house, but nothing disrespectful should come out of your mouth. You are allowing your negative attitude to manifest into a wrong action that will result in the predetermined corrective consequence.”

Attitudes are a matter of the heart, and the heart is not chiefly changed through the disciplining process. The heart of a child is primarily changed through biblical disciplining; training in righteousness; and their willingness to accept parental love, authority, and instruction.

A rebellious heart is a miserable heart. A child with a rebellious heart has no peace, no joy, no contentment, and no lasting pleasure—all by God’s perfect design. What more correction can a parent add to that?

DIG DEEPER

Describe what Jesus said about how to acquire joy and how that joy could be lost.

If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15:10–11)

We must learn that we cannot control our children’s attitudes and emotions any more than we can control our own. Attempting to discipline a child for a bad attitude is a losing battle. It’s controlling and can provoke them to wrath. Instead, we must allow them to feel the way they feel without getting drawn into something we will regret later.

If you know your child is harboring bitterness toward you, or is rebelling against God’s plan for their life, your response must be prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17) and patience without compromise (1 Corinthians 13:4). Do not allow your child’s bad attitude to make you angry or resentful or misrepresent God in the way you treat them. Do not allow their bad attitude to rob you of your inner peace or dictate how you follow through with your planned method of training.

Self-Examination 2

List any attitudes your children have that cause you to react toward them in anger.

ACTION PLAN 3

Have you asked God to forgive you for this response? Now is a good time. Write your prayer to ask for forgiveness.

Pray each day for God’s grace to help you stop and to start taking responsibility. Ask Him to convict your heart to ask your child for forgiveness every time you lose control. Start by talking to your child now if necessary.

Lesson 6

Stay the Course

All children, especially teens, will experiment with using attitude as a form of manipulation or revenge. Manipulation is an attempt to avoid a corrective consequence, or to change the rules. When a child frequently exhibits a poor attitude after a consequence is received, parents will sometimes refrain from giving one in the future to avoid the misery. But the right response would be to let them be miserable—and pray for them. Always follow through with the corrective consequence if they break a rule *and* the motivator if they refuse the corrective consequence.

FACT FILE

Manipulation—“To control or play upon by artful, unfair and insidious means, especially to one’s own advantage.”¹⁷

Do Not Be Manipulated

Children also use manipulation to pressure or guilt their parents into allowing them to do something not normally permitted. A sixteen-year-old girl manipulated her mom into letting her go to a concert she knew was not allowed. The daughter acted sad and depressed every day for a week. As a typical nurturer, her mom asked daily, “What’s wrong?”

All week, the teen merely sighed, “I don’t know. I’m just not happy. I don’t know why.” Finally, on Thursday, she said, “Mom, I’m just sad. I don’t have any friends. If I could just go to this concert tomorrow night with my friends, I would feel better.”

At this point, her mom had been manipulated to the point where she just wanted her poor daughter to be happy. “What concert is that?”

When the daughter told her mom which concert, she replied, “Oh, that’s not a good concert.”

Once again, the young girl sighed, “But, Mom . . .”

Her mom replied, “Okay, I’ll let you go, and I’ll tell Dad . . . Oh, never mind. Let’s not tell him after all. I know he’ll get mad. So let’s keep this between us.” The girl’s manipulation had sucked her mom right in.

Do not let manipulative attitudes wear you down. Not every time a child is sad is a form of manipulation, but when things like this happen, always discuss it as a married couple. Remember, you are a team.

This even starts at a young age with children wanting their own way, such as a two-year-old crying until you give in, which is a form of manipulation. This should not surprise us. We are born prideful (wanting to have our own way) and with foolishness in our hearts (Proverbs 22:15). Effective, age-appropriate corrective consequences are provided in the next lesson.

Do Not Seek Revenge

Some children know a bad attitude will make their parents angry. When you bite the hook, it gives a child satisfaction, which feeds their flesh as well as erodes your foundation and authority. It takes two to play that game. Don't allow a child to entice you into revenge. Don't let their attitude or behavior affect your inner peace. Watch your emotions. Stick with your discipline plan. If you don't play, they will eventually quit this unhealthy, childish game. They will soon discover the attitude-revenge game is no fun when played alone. Yes, God has given us emotions, but we are to exhibit the character quality of a mature adult by exercising self-control, which comes from our strong foundation in Christ.

FACT FILE

Revenge—To inflict injury in return for an insult.

If you are allowing your child's manipulation to make you angry, you are showing them you are not on solid ground, and that your God is weak. They can simply cop an attitude and you flip out. Know they feel superior when you exemplify sinful and weak character, when they can pull your emotional "strings" and get you to react to them with anger or revenge.

Reacting in the flesh to a child's attitude erodes your authority. No one wants to follow a weak leader who has a weak god. Anyone who has been in the armed forces understands that if you have a weak captain, you have no desire to follow him. Children are no different. If a child can control your inner peace and get you angry by having an attitude, they will not want to trust the God you serve and trust.

Revenge versus Training

Your children will know if you are motivated by a revengeful heart when giving a consequence. This is sinful, selfish, and immature. It's not training when we say things like, "Hey, you do that again, Buster, and I'll ruin your life" or "You won't go anywhere for a month if you try to pull that again." That is not love—it's revenge. Reacting with revenge distorts the whole plan you are trying to put into place. Revenge does not train. It causes children to become defiant, causes division between parents and children, and erodes your influence.

Giving children things they hate to do is revenge, not training. Forcing your son to write "I will not argue" five hundred times, because he dislikes doing it, is not training. It is revenge. Similarly, many parents say, "My daughter's phone is her lifeline, so if I threaten to take it away every time she does something wrong, she will behave." Again, that is revenge, not training.

If you and your children 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 (1 Corinthians 13:4), stay the course, and the Lord will bring victory. If your child's bad attitude turns into a poor behavior choice, such as yelling at you, using a bad word, kicking the wall, or slamming the door, simply follow through with the predetermined consequence for that behavior, but do not react to the attitude.

The Lord has instructed us to train up our children, not to inflict injury in reaction to their childish and foolish choices. If our thoughts are to get even with them or hurt them in some way because they will not do what we ask, then it is *our* problem. The Lord gave us these children and expects us to raise them in the way He desires, even though sometimes it is hard to do.

To get a firm grasp on this subject, complete *Appendix M: Disciplining Behavior*.

~~ACTION PLAN~~

If you have had the wrong motive when giving consequences to your children, repent and ask forgiveness from both your child and the Lord.

Stick to the Plan

Training our children as the Lord requires means following His plan. We must provide a loving environment, proper rules and predetermined corrective consequences, motivation (punishment) if they rebel, and consistency. This process is fair, not motivated by anger or revenge, and will transform a child's character into maturity. Children must be motivated by love and our obedience to God—not by selfishness, anger, or the desire to get revenge.

Let all that you do be done with love. (1 Corinthians 16:14)

When I was a child, I used to hold my breath when I did not get my way. Eventually I would turn purple, and my mother would finally give in to my demands. At some point, my mother consulted a pediatrician. He told her, "Don't do anything" in response to my manipulating game. My mom worried that I would pass out. The doctor said, "Let him."

A couple of days later, we came home from church with our good Sunday school clothes on. My brothers went running down the street, and I wanted to run too. But my mother said, "No, Craig, go change your clothes." So I held my breath. My mother just stood there by the car, watching me. Pretty soon I started turning purple and wobbling. I looked down, and one foot was on the concrete, and one foot was on the grass. My mother could see that my brain was processing which way I should fall. But before my brain could figure it, I passed out. And guess which way I fell? Yep, on the concrete. I never held my breath again.

Let your children go through their motions. When your two-year-old child throws a fit and flops around on the floor, casually ask him, "Does that make you feel better?" If he kicks the walls, remind him, "Don't kick my walls, don't scream, and don't say something mean." If he does, just say, "That's a poor choice. I understand you're upset, honey. Remember, that's disrespect. Here is your corrective predetermined consequence." When they know you are not bothered by them, when you are not serving the ball back, they will eventually quit.

Remain a Team

A thirteen-year-old girl, who threw fits like a three-year-old, came to my office. Her parents said, "You don't understand how hard she is. She throws fits all the time when she doesn't get her way."

The girl obviously knew this behavior greatly bothered her mother. The mind games and manipulation had gone on for years, and her mom's reaction had trained her to continue to act like a baby, even as a teenager. Her father had never stepped up to make her stop either. He should have told his wife long ago to let him handle it. The girl continued this childish behavior due to her parents' reluctance to work at training her. They gave in to her demands, and she escaped the corrective consequences necessary for change.

If a wife is unwilling to listen to her husband and yield to his authority when it's time to disengage from a child acting out in this way, it will hinder the relationship both with her child and her husband. A child will develop disrespect toward authority when parents are willing to argue and debate with them and each other.

I walked in on a conversation between my wife and son that was escalating, but she did not recognize it. I said to my oldest son, "Remember who you're talking to. She's my wife. She's my queen. You don't use that tone of voice—ever." My wife did not even see it. She was too engaged in the conversation. I immediately gave him a consequence.

Later my wife and I discussed how they got to that point. She explained that it just seemed to escalate. I told her, "Honey, back in the conversation you could have said, 'That's the end of this discussion. Nick, I heard your side of it, that's enough. I don't want to discuss it anymore. If you open your mouth one more time regarding this discussion, you will get a consequence.'" I supported her when she couldn't see the escalation. And she supports me when I need it.

Parents, work together as a team to train up your children. Pray together. Do not compromise. Do not engage in foolishness. And you will have success.

Five Principles

To examine our progress, let's review five principles from volumes 1 and 2. Has your approach changed? Have you already made positive changes to your parenting style? Do you need to implement anything better or for the first time?

If you have been negligent in any of the following areas, go before the Lord, confess where you have been failing, and ask Him for the wisdom and grace to change. If you have forgotten any of these principles, review the lessons prayerfully and identify those areas where the Lord has spoken to you—especially your answers to the questions, prayers, and personal notes.

The lessons numbers are provided below. Identify what God is saying to you and how you will make changes if necessary.

Principle 1: We are ministers. (volume 1, lesson 3)

We are to represent Christ and carry out His will and goals with a servant's attitude.

Principle 2: We reflect God's glory. (volume 1, lesson 4)

We are to reflect Him to our children. Getting angry is not exhibiting the nature of Christ.

Principle 3: God is transforming us. (volume 1, lesson 5)

God will transform us through these trials and difficulties. We must go through the process.

Principle 4: God is our strong foundation. (volume 1, lessons 6–9)

Our solid foundation provides the strength and understanding to carry out these principles.

Principle 5: The greatest motivator is love. (volume 2, lesson 2)

During the discipline process, it is love that motivates a child, not anger and harsh words.

Examine some of the attributes of love from principle 5.

Love is responding, not reacting (volume 2, lesson 3). Are you responding in love or reacting in the flesh?

Love is a choice, not a feeling (volume 2, lesson 3). Do your emotions govern your responses to your children, or does the Holy Spirit?

Love is practicing 1 Corinthians 13 (volume 2, lessons 4–10). We reviewed the character qualities of love in depth. Our love is patient and kind, not upset and angry with their foolishness. Which loving qualities are you improving in and which do you need to work on?

Love endures through the seasons (volume 2, lessons 10 and 13). We must love them through the different seasons of life, including the teenage years. Write a prayer to God to ask for His grace to stop doing specific unloving behavior(s) toward your child.

Lesson 7

Training for Toddlers

Even if your children are older, I encourage you to read this lesson. You may discover that some root problems, behaviors, or resentments from these earlier years are still affecting your relationship with a particular child—or even with your spouse.

Before we begin practical implementation of the four tools of training, let's examine the "Property Laws of a Toddler."¹⁸ Those who are blessed with children ages eighteen months to five years are probably seeing these in action.

1. If I like it, it's mine.
2. If it's in my hand, it's mine.
3. If I can take it from you, it's mine.
4. If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.
5. If it's mine, it must never appear to be yours in any way.
6. If I'm doing or building something, all the pieces are mine.
7. If it looks just like mine, it's mine.
8. If I saw it first, it's mine.
9. If you are playing with something and you put it down, it automatically becomes mine.
10. If it's broken, it's yours.

The First Five Years

When our little beauties come home from the hospital, they are absolutely self-consumed, lacking any mature or moral character. These toddler years, often characterized by the term "terrible twos," are the ages when your kids spill things, throw things, hurt themselves, and embarrass you. Testing your authority in every area is common. Keeping a sense of humor during this time can keep you from losing your mind.

During the first five years, establishing authority and instilling boundaries are critical. Most children will challenge you daily. But do not panic.

Learning from Nicholas

When my son Nicholas was two years old, I came home to find my wife upset. Apparently, he wouldn't eat. I took the bowl from her, sat in front of him in his high chair, and said, "Hey, you eat."

He looked at me, shoved the bowl toward me, and dumped it.

With Nick, when you pushed his buttons, something in him wanted to push back. In the beginning this made me angry. But I realized he didn't understand why he did it. Nor did he understand why my anger exasperated him. Something like throwing gasoline on fire. Not a smart way to put it out.

When Nick was four years old, I got a phone call at work from my wife. She was crying. On a grocery store trip, she had Justin in the cart and Nick walking beside her—until he spotted the toy section. He ran over, picked out a toy, and said, “Mommy, I want this.”

My wife said to put it back and continued to the end of the aisle. When she turned around, Nick was not following. When she told him to follow, he walked the other way. She had to leave Justin and the basket to go after Nick.

She got halfway down the aisle, and Nick started running. Now she had a crisis, a two-year-old in the cart at one end of the aisle, and a four-year-old running the other way. She rushed back to Justin, starting to panic. She began chasing Nick around the store while pushing a cart full of groceries. He stayed just out of her reach. Finally, she made a mad dash and caught Nick, went back to the cart and grabbed Justin, then exited the store in tears leaving all the groceries behind.

I got in the car and drove home, spanked Nick, and threatened his life. (This was before I understood these principles.) I said, “Don't you ever do this again!” and returned to work.

Less than a week later, my wife called me at work sobbing so hard I thought someone had died.

“What, honey, what?”

“He did it again,” she said.

“Did what again?”

“In the store!” she said.

I came home immediately, went into his room, and gave him a licking you would think he would never forget. When I came out, my wife was still sobbing.

“I can't do this anymore,” she said.

“Honey, look, you'll never shop with him again, I promise. You'll wait until I come home, or I'll go to the grocery store. You won't have to do it, I promise you. I won't put you through this again.”

I went in and told him, “Nick, you're not going with Mom anymore to the grocery store. Either I'm going to do it, or you're going to stay home while she goes.”

A couple of weeks went by, and my wife needed some milk and bread. I happened to be home. She said, “Would you go down and get some?”

Nick piped up, “Can I go?”

“Sure,” I replied.

In my wildest dreams, I did not imagine that this little four-year-old, who was all of forty pounds, would challenge my authority in the store. On the way to the store, I looked at Nick and said, “Nick, you know the rules?”

“Yes, Dad.”

Once in the store, I got the milk and bread and went to the express line to check out. As I looked around, Nick was not behind me. He was standing about thirty feet away with a toy in his hands. I said, “Nick, put it back.” But he did not move. He just put his head down.

What started coming over me at that point was demonic. The milk carton was ready to pop in my hands. The guy behind me started backing up, and everyone noticed what was going on, but I did not care. I was oblivious to the people around me. I was looking at Nick, thinking, *How dare you?* “Nick, do it NOW!”

Still, he did not listen.

Then I said something that I pray you will never say. “Nick, if you don’t do it now, I’m going to drop-kick you across the store. I don’t care who’s here.”

Finally, he darted off and put the toy away. We got into the car, and I spanked him. We got home, and I spanked him again.

Many situations like this led my wife and me to pray and seek help in dealing with Nick. I knew what I was doing was not right, and the spankings did not seem to help. I had to learn how to change and how to discipline properly.

If you are blessed with a strong-willed child like this, hang in there. These tools will work.

Dads Must Get Involved

Dads must be involved in all aspects of discipline. Parents need to work together when the children are small.

When I first got involved in lay ministry at our church, it was important to me that we arrived at church on time. It was embarrassing for me to walk in late.

We lived about twenty minutes from church. One Sunday morning, I was driving about eighty-five miles an hour down the freeway, and my wife asked, “Why are you speeding? You should slow down!”

“If you wouldn’t make us so late, I wouldn’t have to speed!” I said.

She knew I was agitated. After a few moments of silence, she calmly said, “Why don’t you help me in the morning?”

That had never crossed my mind. I looked at her and said, “What do you mean, *help*? I get up and put the cereal bowls out. Once in a while I put the cereal in the bowls before the kids come to breakfast. I even make the coffee. What else do you want me to do?” I was completely oblivious.

“Why don’t you help get the kids dressed?”

The created a crisis in my head. *Do I take this on or what?* I said, “Okay, starting next week, it’s mine.”

The following Sunday morning I got up knowing I could prove my efficiency. The kids were going to be dressed and on time. I walked into the boys’ room, “Hey, come on, boys, let’s get going. Time to get up and get ready for church.” I went downstairs, got everything all ready, but heard nothing from upstairs. It was silent.

When I went back to their room, two little boys were still in bed. I yelled, “Get up, right now!” and pulled down the sheets. “Get out or I’m going to spank you!” Pretty soon they were upset and crying, and I was shoving their clothes on.

I thought I had won, but I was wrong. We got into the car on time, and as we drove down the road, I was feeling pretty accomplished. I looked over at my wife, and her expression said it all. She was looking at me with that face that said, “You big idiot.”

“Hey, we’re on time,” I said.

“Yeah, but look in the back seat,” she replied. Both boys were red-eyed with tears streaming. They did not look like they were ready to go to church and praise God.

As my wife and I discussed how I could do better, I learned how to put a sock on my hand and make a little puppet to sneak under the sheets saying, “Hello! Good morning!” Or I would do the old “wet Willy” in the ear. I would lie next to them and tell a story to make wake-up time fun.

I learned that if I just got their minds running in the morning for ten or fifteen minutes, they were much better at cooperating when I said it’s time to get ready. I learned to adapt without compromise. It took time, but this was my job until my children could do it on their own.

Dads, you can engage here and help. It is not “your part and my part”—it is “ours.”

A quick tip for strong-willed kids: when possible, give them a choice. Nicholas always thought he had to be in control. I eventually learned to pull two pairs of jeans out for him to choose. I could not even tell the difference between the two pairs, but that made him feel like he had a little bit of control. Sometimes you can just give them a choice in a small area, and it makes things work smoother.

Implementing the Tools

Some practices are especially important when you have small children.

Love them.

Remember that love is patient. Expect them to fail and act their age. Do not break a child's spirit by yelling and getting angry. Imagine someone ten times your size coming at you in anger with a booming voice, neck veins popping and eyes bulging. That is not love.

My Nicholas did not understand why he was stubborn, why he struggled, or why he wanted to debate. He didn't know why he was wired that way, not able to articulate and understand. God gave him a strong personality, which I needed to train. When I yelled and got bent out of shape, I was exasperating him to further bad behavior. Instead, I learned how to answer.

The heart of the righteous studies how to answer,
But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil. (Proverbs 15:28)

Is this a struggle for you? Write a prayer asking God to change you.

Stay Calm.

When you lose control, you lose credibility. When your kids see you freaking out, they learn to take advantage and manipulate you to get revenge. When you are out of control, they get out of control. When you disrespect them, they will disrespect you in return.

If you have developed a habit of reacting, you must break it by first asking the Lord to forgive you (repent), then go to your children and ask them to forgive you (confess). Do not let another day go by. Hold yourself accountable to God and your children.

ACTION PLAN 1

Make a commitment to ask your child's forgiveness each time you fail. I cannot tell you how many times I have gone to bed, settling in for a good night's sleep, only to have the Holy Spirit nudge my heart about the way I reacted to one of my children. Many times I left my bed, went into Nick's room, and humbled myself in this way:

"Hey, Nick, how I dealt with you today was wrong. Would you forgive me?"

Do you need to stop now and apologize to one of your children? ___ Yes ___ No

Whether your child is five or fifteen, you owe them an apology if you have reacted with ungodly behavior. Be honest before God. If you truly want to be transformed and stop this ungodly, sinful habit, then you must faithfully take responsibility.

DIG DEEPER

Identify what happens when we do not stay calm and what practice is needed to stay calm.

A wrathful man stirs up strife,
But he who is slow to anger allays contention. (Proverbs 15:18)

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

If you have failed in this area, explain how you will obey God's instruction.

Teach them to obey and respect your authority.

Your kids must be taught that you are the God-given authority in their lives. They need to know that you are giving them rules, consequences, and punishing them when necessary, because this is what God has commanded you to do. To do this, you must walk in intimate fellowship with God every day. If you expect your children to submit to your authority, you must show them that you are in submission to God's authority.

Share this verse with them concerning God's instruction.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. (Ephesians 6:1)

Be consistent.

If you say you will do something, then follow through. Lack of consistency can hinder the whole discipline process, which is designed to lead a child to maturity. Follow your discipline plan. If you don't, children will figure ways to manipulate their way out of following any discipline plan.

Childproof your home.

You may have a strong-willed child who keeps getting into the older kids' toys or your things. You could build a high shelf or locking cabinet if your three-year-old plays with toys he shouldn't have access to—and even breaks them. We do not think twice about locking up the poison, but it can be just as important to put out of reach those things that cause contention between siblings and affect a peaceful home.

~~ACTION PLAN 2~~

List anything you need to change or items you need to relocate in your home to minimize the amount of strife and corrections.

A young child's cognitive skills and understanding of life, their ability to process information and experiences, and their ability to make judgments and understand concepts are limited. They do not yet comprehend the difference between corrective consequence and punishment. They will understand eventually as you remain consistent, calm, and patiently work with them.

When small children are corrected or receive a consequence, they may respond with, "You don't love me." Maybe you have heard this from your child. If your habit has been screaming and yelling when correcting them, you may have a difficult time convincing them that this is what love looks like. You must learning how to give a consequence correctly and train without anger or frustration.

Sample Rules

You need to establish specific boundaries by the time your children reach fifteen to eighteen months of age. Here are some suggestions for eighteen months to five years old.

Rule 1: Respect one another at all times—parents and siblings.

Consequence: Time-out for 3–5 minutes (using a timer).

Rule 2: No physical fighting or verbal arguing.

Consequence: Time-out for 3–5 minutes.

Rule 3: Clean up your own messes, toys, etc.

Consequence: Time-out and the toy gets put away for two days (if the toy was left out).

Respect and Obedience

The number one rule must be that your children respect you. During the first five years when you are teaching them this rule, you are also defining their concept of respect. Obviously, a three-year-old does not know what the word *respect* means. When they get mad and say, "I hate you," they do not understand that was disrespectful.

When things come up and they respond in the wrong way, you need to say, "Now look, I understand you're upset, but what you just said was disrespectful. The next time you say that, you will have a consequence for disrespect." By doing this you are beginning the work of defining

and instilling morals and values. Respect means that they are honoring you. Ephesians 6:2 says, “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise.” You are also helping them to understand God’s will, which honors God as well.

Not obeying your command is a form of disrespect. If you ask your child to do something and they do not comply, you need to give them a corrective consequence. Do not get into the habit of raising your voice or using their middle name to get their attention. If they do not comply, simply follow through and give them the predetermined corrective consequence. As part of your follow-up, they need to be reminded that obeying parents also pleases God.

Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.
(Colossians 3:20)

A typical corrective consequence for disrespect would be time-out. Many parents use a child’s bedroom or a certain chair. Purchase an inexpensive timer, and set it according to the child’s age. (A three-year-old sits for three minutes.) You can use a playpen for little kids so they can’t crawl out. They will understand the concept when you say no after they continue a behavior, pick them up, put them in the playpen, and set the timer.

For children two to five, choose a chair conveniently within your view. Do not stick them in a corner to stare at a blank wall. That is demeaning and does not teach or train them. The principle of giving a corrective consequence is not for parents to choose methods that kids hate but methods that make them willing to yield to authority and receive training.

When was the last time God made you stand in the corner with your nose against the wall for your disobedience? God does not do that to us, and we should not do it to our children. Remember that foolishness is normal, not bad. Children just need to be trained.

With a strong-willed child, you need to define what “sit in the chair” means. If you do not define it, they will soon be standing on the chair, scooting it across the floor, or lying upside down on it. They are trying to be in control. So you must define it for them, “Butt on the chair, chair in the same spot.” Your more compliant children will just sit there.

If they get out of the chair before the timer is done, they are choosing the motivator/punishment. If you use spanking as your punishment, just spank them, put them back in the chair, and start the timer again.

The “Principles of Spanking” will be defined in the next lesson.

Bedtime (in their own bed)

There is no biblical instruction for when a child should stop falling asleep in your bed. Some people use Scripture to indicate that this will cause emotional damage. But there is nothing wrong with allowing your kids to fall asleep in your bed. However, it may be difficult when you want to break this habit. If you choose to do this, a good rule is that children should be trained to fall asleep in their own beds by three years old.

We chose to not allow our boys to sleep in our bed except for occasional times when they were scared or sick. But it was different with our daughter. She was our little princess. Both my wife and I let it happen often. After she would fall asleep, we would carry her to bed. My wife finally said, "Honey, I think it's time for her to learn to fall asleep in her own bed."

A couple came to me for counseling who had a thirteen-year-old son still sleeping in their bed. The husband was very unhappy about this. As a child, the wife had been physically abused by her stepdad when she was in bed. Hurt, fear, and unforgiveness led her to allow their son to fall asleep with them since birth. That is wrong and very unhealthy for the marriage and the child. It was difficult to break both the son's bad habit and his mother's emotional fears, but they found victory through forgiveness and a good plan.

If Dad is home at bedtime, it is good for Mom to let him lead in putting the children to bed. Wives often end up lying down and falling asleep with the kids, leaving the husband to go to sleep by himself. Men, you need to step up and participate in this area, if needed.

It is helpful to tie the transition to a birthday. Dad could say, "Okay, you're three! You know what that means? It is time for you to start sleeping in your own bed." The child will most certainly reply that they don't want to, but you must be firm. Explain to your child, "I understand that, honey, but it's your bedtime. Here's your water. Here's a nightlight. I'll pray with you and leave the door open. Say goodnight to Mommy." When the child says, "I want Mommy" while lying in bed, Dad must remain firm and remind the child that they already said goodnight to Mommy.

For the next five days, you may want to lie down with them or kneel next to their beds for a few minutes to help the transition, but you need to work toward training them to do it on their own. Establish the consequences before you leave the room: "If you get out of your bed, I will put you back in. If you get out a second time, it will be a swat on your butt and back to bed." While this is a rare exception to the rules we will establish about spanking in the next chapter, it will be important to train the child in this case. If it happens, comfort the child for a few moments and then walk out of the room.

When you walk out, they will often begin to cry. Set a timer for five minutes. The timer is for *you* because five minutes of a child crying is a long time. After five minutes, go back and comfort them (just for a few moments), saying, "I'm here. We didn't leave you."

"Where's Mommy? Did she leave?"

"No, she's here, but it is time for bed now."

"I want to see her."

"No."

"I want Mommy."

"No, Dad's here. And you need to go to sleep."

Explain that you know this is hard, but it is part of growing up. After you leave the room a second time, set the timer for ten minutes, and do not go back until that time is up unless they get out of bed. If they do, follow through with one swat, put them in bed, and walk out again. Stay consistent with this. Every time you do it, add another five minutes to the timer. Usually, the transition is complete in three to four days.

Bedtime was difficult for my son Nicholas. He didn't want to fall asleep because he would be missing something. He would purposely wedge himself in the corner of his bed so he could not get comfortable. He knew if he would lie flat, he would fall asleep. There were nights when he would cry for two hours before falling asleep.

It was hard on all of us. A few times when I went out of town, my wife got suckered into letting him fall asleep in our bed. We had at least two more nights of struggle once I came home.

With our other son, Justin, we said, "Hey, Justin, this is the bedtime."

He said, "Okay," and that was it.

I come from a large family, and we have lots of kids running around when we're together. My parents have a total of forty-one grandchildren. When my kids were young, we would all go camping together. The sun would rise at six o'clock, and there was five-year-old Nick wide-awake. Everyone else was asleep, but he would be demanding, "Get me dressed." He would walk around, knocking on everyone's camper doors. At ten o'clock at night, he would still be out there by the fire when all the other kids were asleep, saying, "What's next?" And you thought you had the only strong-willed, hyper child.

Pick Up Your Messes

Moms are not maids. Everyone must pick up their own messes. You can start this at a young age with their toys. Obviously, most three-year-olds are not going to independently pick up toys. Do it with them at first to help them learn. If they do not help you, the consequence is that you confiscate the toy (make sure they see you), put it in a brown bag, and stash it in the closet. Say, "The corrective consequence for not helping Mommy is that your toy stays there for one day." This consequence directly relates to the violation.

No Means No

Your children must respect you. Give them a consequence for asking over and over after you have already said no. Another typical rule for small kids is "no whining." Whining is simply a form of manipulation. Give them a time-out when they indulge themselves in whining to get their way.

Other rules could be no biting (if needed) or hitting, which could be handled with a time-out.

Exceptions to Time-Out and Spanking Rules

In some cases, such as bedtime, church, or whenever you are pressed for time, you cannot give a time-out. If they won't stay in bed, get out of the bath, or get dressed, you can warn them about getting a spanking. Say, "Listen, I want you out of the tub now. If you do not get out of the tub now, you're going to get a spanking." That is the exception, not the rule.

During these times when you do not have other options for corrective consequences, you must clearly explain the rule and the punishment/motivator. If they do not respond correctly, follow through. Going directly to spanking is used only in time-constraint situations.

Self-Examination

List your current rules and your corrective consequences (for all ages). If you need more space, use a separate sheet of paper. If there are any rules or corrective consequences that you do not *completely* agree on as a couple, put an asterisk beside them for discussion.

Rule 1: _____

Consequence _____

Rule 2: _____

Consequence _____

Rule 3: _____

Consequence _____

Rule 4: _____

Consequence _____

Rule 5: _____

Consequence _____

What has been the punishment when your child refuses to accept the corrective consequence?

ACTION PLAN 3

Create your own rules and corrective consequences for this age group, eighteen months to five years (as a couple). Use the worksheet in *Appendix N: Rules and Consequences*. However, do not implement these rules until you have completed lesson 11, "Starting Over."

Lesson 8

Principles of Spanking

The Bible commands parents to discipline their children “while there is hope.” The principles in this lesson will help you understand this challenging part of discipline in your home.

Chasten your son while there is hope,
And do not set your heart on his destruction. (Proverbs 19:18)

This proverb is also a warning against parental passivity. A child guilty of wrongdoing should be chastened (disciplined) with a corrective consequence, and punishment when needed, in the early years while there is still hope. To neglect needed discipline may even contribute to capital punishment under the law later in life.

Principle 1: Plan Ahead

Choose in advance what will be corrected with spanking. (See Proverbs 6:16–19 for what the “the Lord hates.”) Many parents go directly to the punishment rather than the corrective consequence. But that does not work. Go to the predetermined corrective consequence first, and if they refuse the consequence (rebel), then go to the punishment. Establish how, when, and for what this type of punishment will be issued to avoid being ruled by emotions.

Principle 2: Do It in Love

Spank only in love. Never spank in anger or when you are not in control of your own emotions. For a punishment to be effective, it must be done in the context of a loving relationship. That means being in control of your own emotions, without anger or yelling.

Let all that you do be done with love. (1 Corinthians 16:14)

Principle 3: Make It Immediate

Spank your child as soon as possible after the act of defiance. This is an opportunity to motivate your child to accept training immediately next time. If is not possible in certain situations (in public or visiting a friend), you may need sit the child right next to you until you are able to spank. If they remain defiant, you may need take them home to handle it. The sooner the better.

Principle 4: Seek Privacy

Spank your child in private, away from brothers and sisters, other adults, and public places.

Think about being pulled over by the police for speeding when you are just getting to church. You are on the roadside, and everyone you know is passing by to get to church. You’d probably want to hide your face, thinking, *Come on, officer. Please hurry. Somebody might see me.* It is embarrassing to us as adults. Do you think it is any less embarrassing to our children?

When you are at home, visiting friends, or in a public setting, find somewhere private for this type of discipline. Many people in our society believe spanking is illegal. Or you may live in a country where spanking is illegal. If so, you need to decide how you will motivate your children to yield. See the end of the lesson for alternative punishments.

While spanking your children correctly is still legal in most countries, doing it in public could bring social services to your home for an interview. They may even try to remove your children from your home. I have worked with cases like this when they did remove one of the children for this reason. In some cases, it went on for several months in court. If the spanking had been done correctly, the judge would have assigned counseling and returned the child home. You must be wise when using this form of punishment.

Principle 5: Show Respect

Never spank a child in a way that shows disrespect. This includes verbally lashing them during your emotional meltdown over their behavior. Some parents make their children pull their pants down to spank, which is disrespectful to the child and should not be done.

The right place to spank is on the buttocks, the fatty area. If you stay within that area, you are also on safe ground with most legal authorities. When you move away from that area, you are crossing some lines.

Principle 6: Use the Right Amount

Use a measured amount of pain. Never spank more than necessary. Determine ahead of time how many swats they will get. Do not become agitated or surprised if they say, "That didn't hurt." The goal is not to make them cry but to establish a way to motivate them when they rebel and refuse the corrective consequence.

If your child responds with, "That didn't hurt," calmly respond by asking if they want another spanking and telling them they have five seconds to answer. If they say no, the spanking worked. If they say yes, make a disrespectful face, or answer inappropriately, they are still acting foolish and need another spanking. They usually say nothing the first time you ask this question. Following through with another spanking usually ends the problem. Next time that strong-willed child will most likely think twice before saying that.

Principle 7: Be Consistent

Consistency is critical when spanking. If you say you are going to spank, then make sure to follow through. Equally important is them understanding *why* they are receiving the punishment each time they need to be spanked.

Principle 8: Provide an Explanation

Before the spanking, talk with your child in a firm but loving voice to explain why the punishment is taking place. "I'm spanking you because you're refusing to sit in the chair. If you would sit in the chair and accept the corrective consequence, then you would not have to receive the punishment of a spanking."

After the spanking, lovingly explain again why they were given a spanking. Be sure to wait until the child has calmed down if necessary. See principle 10.

Principle 9: The Right Reason

Never spank a child for childishness or messiness. Spank them for willful defiance, when the child is unwilling to accept the corrective consequence.

When I was eight years old, I loved chocolate milk. One day after my parents had just put in new carpet, I was making chocolate milk and spilled the chocolate powder all over the brand-new carpet. Being a child, I did not know I should get the vacuum. I used a wet rag instead. No matter how much I rubbed and scraped, the stain just kept getting bigger and blacker. *That* is an example of childishness—an accident.

When you discover your ten-year-old got into your tools, left them outside during the rain, and they rusted, consider what you value more—your child or the tools. This is when you say to him, “Poor choice. Here’s your corrective consequence.” God knows how to reveal our hearts and test what we really value. And when you blow it, ask your child to forgive you.

Principle 10: Affirm Your Love

Affirm your love after punishing. Hugs are good, but only if they want to be hugged. Be open and willing to show loving affection in a way that is comfortable for your child, and remember that every child is different.

The last thing Nick wanted after he was punished, or even given a corrective consequence, was to be hugged. He would wait about thirty minutes and then jump on my back and want to wrestle. But Justin and Katie immediately wanted a hug, to be reassured of our love right away.

Each child is different. If one does not want affection, then do not push it on them. Study each child to learn what makes them feel loved and what strengthens the parent-child relationship.

Dealing with Issues

Manipulation

Do not allow your child to manipulate. Children will try to divert the deserved spanking by accusing you of not loving them or by apologizing profusely. But if they did not respond properly to the corrective consequence, you must follow through immediately with the punishment. Do not let them create a temporary power struggle.

Excessive Crying

Excessive crying, screaming, or yelling during or after spanking must be handled. What do you do when your child is screaming like you are killing them? Break that cycle by explaining that this behavior will cause them to be put into their room for a period of time after the spanking. Use a timer if needed. Let them know the timer will begin when they stop screaming. Also mention that coming out of the room before the timer goes off will cause another spanking. Once they figure out that you are going to stay calm and consistent, they will begin to break this childish behavior.

Paddle versus Hand

Worldly psychology has taught for many years to not use your hand in order to separate yourself from the spanking. But do you think when you are spanking your child with an object that they do not know who is swinging it?

I am a firm believer in using your hand. When God speaks of “the rod of correction (Proverbs 22:15),” He is speaking of the tool of measurement and the authority. Your hand gives full control of how hard you spank. You can also more effectively control the area of the spanking. The same hand that rubs their face, holds them, wipes their tears, feeds them, and shows love is the same hand that corrects them when they need it.

If you plan to use an object, get a flat paddle. If you use a spoon and hit too far down, you could leave a bruise and open the door for accusations of abuse.

I’ve counseled many kids and heard how they felt when a parent used an object for spanking. It was not so much the spanking that bothered them but the object their parents used. My experience is that your hand is the best tool for spanking. God set the example for us (1 Samuel 5:6, 9, 11; 7:13).

However, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you, as it was against your fathers. (1 Samuel 12:15)

Also the hand of God was on Judah to give them singleness of heart to obey the command of the king and the leaders, at the word of the Lord. (2 Chronicles 30:12)

Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends,
For the hand of God has struck me! (Job 19:21)

The same hand that blesses us also motivates us when we need it. God is always there with His tender love to discipline us when needed. He handles all the training Himself, but that is not the case within our homes. Dad, you should be the primary one responsible for establishing the training and issuing the corrective consequences and punishment in the home. But remember that both Dad and Mom are a team and are to work together.

When Dad Is Not Home

What happens during a typical day when Dad is not home and the kids need discipline?

“Help me pick up these toys.”

“No, I don’t want to.”

“This is one of the rules Dad has established. If you don’t help, the toy gets picked up and put away for two days.”

Married moms, lean on Dad. We are following Dad's rules. Lean on his protective authority. Your greatest companionship need as a wife is loving security, so let your husband protect you in this. Don't argue with your kids over why a rule exists or why a corrective consequence is given. Just say, "This is what Dad and I decided to do, and these are his wishes."

Alternative Punishments

For children eighteen months to five years, put the child into a playpen or a bedroom for a period of time or until they are willing to accept the time-out (corrective consequence).

Physically hold the child in your lap (carefully but firmly) until they are willing to accept the corrective consequence. Begin a time-out once the child sits on their own without any physical constraints.

Lesson 9

Positive versus Corrective

Our society has embraced the “positive reinforcement” concept of parenting. Sadly, most of it is wrong and distorted. Using charts and rewards seems to work well with compliant children—but it has side effects. Have you noticed how many teens and young adults today have an entitlement mentality? They think someone owes them. If their reward does not seem good enough, they will quit or blame someone else for not getting what they think they deserve. This type of parenting does not work at any age, especially with strong-willed kids.

Love is the most powerful motivator, and the most effective way to build self-worth in a child, not gifts and gimmicks. Because they are a gift from God, we are to praise our children and practice our love toward them daily. Good behavior is expected, not rewarded. When the apostles were asking Jesus to increase their faith and duty (Luke 17:5–10), He gave them a humble perspective of the type of attitude they needed after they had done what God asked of them.

When you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, “We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.” (Luke 17:10)

We are carrying out a humble service for God in loving our children, and likewise our children are obeying us because that is what He asks of them (Ephesians 6:1).

Read Appendix O: Positive Reinforcement for additional guidance.

The Right Attitude

Remember when your children were beginning to walk? You helped them and encouraged them as they took their first steps. You did not say, “You’re embarrassing me! Get up! I was running by the time I was your age.” When they fell, you picked them back up again and continued to help them. God says we must maintain that same type of attitude toward training our children.

Occasionally, it could be beneficial to offer a reward to encourage a particular behavior. For example, my son Nicholas struggled with reading retention. He could read a paragraph several times and still not understand it. This affected his academic progress and feeling of self-worth. Several of our family members have also struggled with this, including me.

Nick would spend hours on his spelling words and get a C on his test, while Justin would look at them for fifteen minutes and get an A. It seemed unfair for Nick, so I would say, “Nicholas, I know this is hard for you, but if you work hard on this thing, we’re going to do this for you.” For example, you could get a small ice cream or go on a special outing together. When I did that, I would take Justin aside, and say, “Look, Justin, I’m going to do this for Nick because you know how he struggles academically.” Then I would make sure I did something for Justin. For specific circumstances, positive reinforcement is okay.

Self-Examination

If you are using charts, graphs, or another system to record your child's good or bad behaviors (accompanied with rewards or demerits), describe how you believe this system is or is not working with your compliant or strong-willed child.

If your compliant child acts like or makes comments that they are better than their strong-willed sibling, describe it here.

Gifts or merits *can* motivate children to work hard or try harder at certain things, but they will not build self-worth in them.

How often do you compliment and praise your children—because they are a gift from God and wonderfully made?

Are most of your praises tied their performance? Explain.

Is good behavior expected in your home because it is right, or is it rewarded to get something in return? Explain.

Does your love toward them, or how you show it, change because of their failures? __ Yes __ No

Do you have a compliant child whose natural bent is to please you? __ Yes __ No

Do you have a strong-willed child who resents their compliant sibling and struggles with their own self-worth? __ Yes __ No

Strong-willed children can become discouraged when their compliant sibling receives more gifts or affirmation from what they perceive comes more naturally to the compliant sibling.

A perpetual system of rewards for good behavior for compliant children can set the stage for an entitlement mentality. It teaches children to serve, to do, or to sacrifice only when it has a personal benefit for them that they believe is worth it.

Describe how this could negatively affect your child as an adult.

Is your attitude toward your child's failures similar to when they first began to walk? Proud and excited, you watched as they first stood on their own and took their first steps. When they fell, you 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.

If not, explain your attitude toward your child's failures.

Corrective Consequence Box

When your child is around six, you can transition to the "consequence box" in place of time-outs. This method can be used into adolescence. In a jar, a shoebox, or any easily opened container, place folded pieces of paper listing age-appropriate chores. If you have a six- and an eight-year-old, they could use the same box. Older children could have a different box if needed. Suggested chores are dusting a room, vacuuming a room, sweeping the back patio, picking up toys in playroom, or whatever works in your home.

Have your kids help create the box and write the chores. It is fun to watch them choose the corrective consequences and write them on the papers. They are not thinking about themselves getting the consequence. They are thinking about a sibling getting it, which makes them creative.

When it is time for a corrective consequence, they randomly draw a piece of paper and do whatever it says. If the task has recently been completed, just have them draw another one.

If they say, "I'm not going to do the consequence," motivate (spank) them for rebellion. If they still do not accept the corrective consequence after a spanking, they go into their room until they are

willing to perform the discipline. Do not let them out of that consequence. Remember, punishment is not the trainer. It does not educate or build character—corrective consequence does. Follow through with the punishment, but they must finish the consequence also.

When Nick was eleven years old, he pulled from the corrective consequence box, which he did often. His consequence was “Clean all the toilets.” The house we had at the time had four bathrooms. My wife and I looked at each other and said, “Clean the toilets? We don’t remember putting that in there.” My wife grabbed her rubber gloves and the toilet brush, marched him into the bathroom, showed him how to do the first one, and he was off.

While she was gone, I looked in the box. When she came back into the kitchen, I said, “Look, there are twice as many papers.” So we dumped them out and started reading. Eventually, we came across one that read “Do all Justin’s chores.” Two days earlier, Nick had been bothering Justin, and Justin wanted to get back at him, so he spiced up the consequence box. Justin would get a consequence, on average, every fourth day. Nick sometimes got five a day. He thought it was the best way to get back at Nick.

We all thought what Justin did was quite funny. As a matter of fact, we left in at least half the ones he added. He was very creative. But be careful where you put the box—because things may happen to it. It could mysteriously disappear, with all the hard work that went into creating it.

Related Corrective Consequences

As a child matures, around eight years old, introduce related consequences when appropriate. For example, you live on a dead-end street, which is a safe place to ride a bicycle. Since it is dangerous beyond that, your rule is to ride bikes only to a certain point. If they cross that line without getting permission, they lose the privilege of that bike for a two-day period.

You can be creative, but make sure it is related to the bicycle. Do not take away their video games, which has nothing to do with riding their bike down the street.

Basic Rules

Children of all ages need clearly defined rules and consequences. Review *Appendix N: Rules and Consequences* for age-appropriate examples and a template to create your own list.

No Fighting or Arguing

When your children are in a mutual conflict that spills over into your attempt to discipline them, you are often battered with information on who started it, who did what first, and so on. If you have a written rule of no fighting or arguing, you can merely walk into the room and say, “All right, the next one to speak to the other in the next fifteen minutes will get a corrective consequence.” Separate them into different areas of the house, set the timer, and go about your business.

When one runs in and says, “He stuck his tongue out at me,” you provide a corrective consequence. Then you go get the other one and give him a corrective consequence too. Both broke the rules. Don’t let their childish foolishness control you.

No Lying

If children are caught lying, they get double consequences. But they must be told this in advance, so make it clear in your family rules. Simply give them two consequences from the list or box if you catch them lying about anything.

Clean Your Own Mess

You are not the maid. Children must clean their own messes. When they do not, they get a corrective consequence.

A good rule is to have each child keep their room clean. My children were expected to make their beds and straighten the rooms before they went to school. However, if your own room is not cleaned up, then do not expect your kids to do it.

When we presented this rule, my kids said they wouldn't have time before school. My response was, "That's right. If you have your bedroom picked up before you go to sleep, the only thing you have to do in the morning is pull up your sheets." The bedroom is a wonderful training tool.

New Punishment Techniques

As a child progresses toward adolescence (ages ten to thirteen), parents should move from spanking to different methods of punishment. Spanking older children usually does more harm than good by provoking and humiliating them. New techniques are used to motivate (punish) and convince an adolescent to accept the corrective consequence.

Shutdown

If your child refuses the corrective consequence, an effective punishment is "shutdown." This means no privileges: no television, phone, music, games, or friends over, and it may include being confined to their bedroom. Their only freedoms will be to go to school and church, eat meals, use the restroom, and do their chores and homework. This continues until they are willing to accept the corrective consequence. Shutdown can last for five minutes or five days (or longer).

Saturday Workday

A workday is an effective punishment for a teenager who refuses to accept your authority (or someone you have left in charge), especially in the absence of the father (like a mother, stepparent, grandparent, babysitter, or guardian).

Have your child work on Saturday morning to complete the tasks given. Provide a to-do list to begin at 8:00 a.m. 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 shutdown mode.

Driving Restrictions

Revoke driving privileges for a short or long period of time. Specify the designated time that it is taken away and when it will be returned. Only reinstate their driving privileges after that set time, not when their attitude is better.

If necessary, you can legally rescind their driver's license or permit with a written request from the parent to the DMV. This official consequence should only be used if a child is rebelling against the rules and corrective consequences and is leaving in their car or your car. Be sure to explain the *legal* ramifications of breaking this rule so your child understands.

ACTION PLAN

Create your family rules and consequences. Set aside time as soon as possible to do this. Ask God to help you and give you wisdom in creating your family rules. Use *Appendix N: Rules and Consequences* for examples and to create your own list. Ask Him to help you be unified (if married) as husband and wife. However, do not implement these rules until you have completed lesson 11, "Starting Over."

Lesson 10

Training through Adolescence

If parents have implemented well-defined boundaries and consistently used corrective consequences during a child's first nine years, the transition into adolescence will be relatively smooth. Many changes occur between ages thirteen and fifteen: the season of puberty. Puberty is a period of two to four years when a child's body is undergoing changes leading to what we call adulthood. This wonderful transformation can be frightening for them and frustrating for us. It could be, and probably will be, a bumpy ride. But we must remember that this season is God-ordained, a prescribed process fully known to Him, as He designed it.

To everything there is a season,
A time for every purpose under heaven. (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

Puberty is a time when kids experience a growth spurt. As size and physical strength increase, the body shape begins to look more like an adult. Your son's voice will begin to change. Ironically, before they acquire a deep manly voice, like Dad, they can go through a squeaky period where they sound more like Mom, especially over the telephone. Your daughter will experience the embarrassment and excitement of getting her first bra. Parents must remember that they are the adults and need to have patience and compassion with their maturing children.

Emotional changes also occur during this period as a child begins to think more independently and seek distance from parents. They have a strong desire to be accepted by their peers and begin to pursue close friendships. Heightened awareness of the opposite sex, with feelings of attraction, is part of maturing sexuality. In our sex-obsessed society, teens are exposed to many temptations, pressures, and mixed messages about sex. During this time, it is vitally important that home is where sexual purity and godly morality are taught and expected as the behavioral standard. It is also important that parents openly discuss sex. A child must hear the truth and develop healthy attitudes, which should come from you. If you don't answer questions and satisfy their curiosity, they will get information, or *misinformation*, from their friends.

To help you better understand teenagers and assist you in setting healthy boundaries for your children with opposite-sex friends, visit our website for the book *Understanding Teens*.

Your Developing Child

The teen years are a period when your developing child will begin to think abstractly and symbolically, which means they are thinking a lot like you think. When they perceive that something is not right, they can look at the situation with better understanding and see another person's point of view.

Teens will usually, to varying degrees, test the structure and values you have taught them at home. Your children have been observing and absorbing your words and actions for their entire lives. They know you very well. Be warned that when a pubescent teen senses division between

Mom and Dad in management style, contradictions in rules, or any hypocrisy, they will surely point it out.

As a child matures, they often become goal-oriented and have a desire to get on with life. While feeling this unstoppable need for more independence, they can become antsy, impatient, anxious, and even seem rebellious. They do not have the answers to important questions about what is happening to them. Such questions as: What is the source of all these changes that come with adolescence? What is a mature adult, and how do I become one? Therefore, parents need to define these questions to guide the adolescent in a positive direction, keeping them focused on the goals of maturity.

The changes teens experience are unavoidable, healthy, and part of God's perfect design. Our children did not ask for puberty. Many have a difficult time adjusting to these changes, which is why parents need to educate themselves. Every child needs parental wisdom and help getting through this period, some much more than others. And each one of these changes (physical, emotional, and cognitive) are tools that God has provided for them on the path of becoming mature adults.

ACTION PLAN

List some of the changes you see in your adolescent children. If you have not been sensitive during this time of change (all ordained by God), ask God to forgive you for your negative actions, and then write a prayer for help. Go to your teen and ask forgiveness if needed.

Moving toward Independence

Begin to give your teen more freedom and independence. Respect their privacy, but do not compromise standards. Don't snoop in their room just for the sake of snooping. Your sons and daughters need to know that you see them as young adults, not children. One of the ways to do this is by making their thirteenth birthday a special event. Spend time with your child, discussing the changes they are facing. Take every opportunity to reaffirm your love for them and their value to you. Let them know you are on their team and that you will be there to support and help them through this time.

Our adolescent kids may look like adults, but they are not yet mature. Many parents make the mistake of pulling back from the training process with teenagers. You can stop training when they become responsible, mature adults, or when they leave your home, whichever comes first. You need to make this clear to them. And remember that you are *training* them, not *controlling* them.

Testing Authority

Adolescents will naturally begin to test your authority. It may feel like the “terrible twos” are back, but the child has gained a hundred pounds. Do not compromise during this season, specifically in the following areas. Continue to *actively* parent.

Number 1: Respect and Obey

Show respect to both parents. No exceptions. This means obeying and speaking respectfully, and no mouthing off. This also can include their “help” with parenting the other siblings. It is common for teens to act like you need help with their younger siblings, so make it clear that there two parents in the house—not three.

Teens may start telling you what they are going to do, rather than asking for permission: “I am going to Taylor’s house, and I’ll be home by 7:00.” To which you reply, “Whoa, are you asking me or telling me?” Your teen may not think it’s a big deal, so you must make it clear. If they are telling you, the answer is no. If they are asking you, you will consider it.

This is a typical power struggle during these years, but it can sneak up and leave you wondering when they seized control. Although this behavior needs to be identified and checked, consider it normal. Do not get upset and react in anger. Just correct it lovingly and consistently.

Number 2: Morals and Values

Do not compromise the morals and values you have established within your home. This includes personal interests and pleasures like phone use, music, TV, and games. My son Nick was really into music, so we made a rule. He could listen to any music he wanted, but I had to read and approve the lyrics first if it wasn’t Christian music. One time my wife found some inappropriate CDs at the bottom of Nick’s drawer. We looked up the bands online and read the lyrics. His CDs were destroyed, and he had consequences from the corrective consequence box—one for each inappropriate CD.

We found out that seven of the CDs we destroyed were not Nick’s. They belonged to his Christian friend. When it got back to the parents that we had destroyed their son’s CDs, and my son had to do corrective consequences, they called us and apologized. “Tell your son he doesn’t have to pay him back because we don’t want that in our house either.” Then they asked me for advice on how to deal with this out-of-control problem with their son.

Since most music today is downloaded to playlists, parents must investigate. Review what your children watch and listen to, especially what they download to their phones, tablets, and computers. If it’s not appropriate, get rid of it.

Number 3: Mandatory Training

Training can stop when they become responsible adults or when they leave your home, whichever comes first. If your teen tells you they don’t need training anymore, you can tell them they will no longer receive corrective consequences if they stay within the rules. If they break a rule, they are demonstrating to both of you that they need further training.

Sample Rules for Adolescents

Wake-Up Time

If you find yourself going in two or three times every morning to wake up your teen, you are not helping that child. Get them an alarm clock (or tell them to use an app on their phone). When my boys turned nine years old, I gave them an alarm clock and said, “Wake yourselves up. Get up on your own, get yourselves dressed, and get ready for school.”

The longer you put off, the harder it is to implement. If your teenager runs late or is not ready by a certain time, give them a corrective consequence. It could be going to bed a half hour or hour early that night, plus a consequence upon arriving home that day.

Bathroom Schedules

Sharing bathrooms in the morning can be hectic. Give your teens a schedule to keep peace in your home. Agree to their allotted time (from 6:00 to 6:30 a.m.). If they are not out of the bathroom *on time*, they get a corrective consequence. Schedules can be used to fix any areas that may be creating havoc for the family.

Curfew

If you set a curfew at 10:00 p.m., your child will want to be out every night until that time. Instead, make curfew specific to each situation. Every time they leave your home, they need to let you know where they are going, who they are going with, which parent will be there, who is driving, and when they will be home. If the plans change, they must call you first to get permission.

Be careful here: don’t let them begin to pull away too soon by being out several times each week.

Phone and Computer Privileges

By the time your child reaches thirteen, you may rarely see them because they stay their room. The answer to that problem can be no phone in the bedroom. But a strict policy can cause them to pull away from the family prematurely. The rule must make sense, perhaps when the phone is interrupting homework, other responsibilities, or family time. Encourage your teen to participate with the family, making together time appealing.

Most kids now have their own phones at a young age, and some teens have their own computers. But be careful. Cell phones and computers provide advantages but can also be distractions. Before this becomes a problem, you must create family rules for cell phone and computer use.

These rules are important, especially concerning your child’s communication with the opposite sex. Set a schedule for days and times they can communicate with their friends on the phone or computer. And make sure you know their friends. If their phone or computer chat time is 7:30 to 8:00 p.m., the corrective consequence for breaking the rule is two days without the phone or computer or both.

See *Appendix N: Rules and Consequences* for example rules. Visit our website, FDM.world, for more suggestions about parental controls.

Creative Punishments for Teens

In the last lesson we identified three new punishment techniques for teens: shutdown mode, Saturday workday, and driving restrictions. But what happens when they challenge those?

When a Teen Challenges Mom's Authority

Moms often are not as intimidating as dads when it comes to corrective training. Mom, what will you do when Dad is not home and your eleven-year-old son refuses his corrective consequence? At that point, he goes into shutdown until Dad gets home or until he accepts the corrective consequence. If he has not cooperated by the time Dad arrives, give him a double corrective consequence. No freedom is given until your son performs his consequences.

When my son Nick began to challenge my wife and not accept the corrective consequence, she sent him to his room. When I came home, my wife would tell me what had happened. I would go in and say, "Nick, what happened?" He'd give me his side of the story. The reality was he wanted door number 3 (review lesson 5), but it didn't exist. I would give him two consequences for not doing what Mom asked him to do.

When a Teen Refuses Punishment

Occasionally a teen refuses shutdown. It's time to call Dad and describe the problem so he is prepared to resolve the situation when he arrives home. When Dad asks the teen about the problem, the teen will often say it's not fair. The best way for Dad to deal with the issue now is to provide additional punishment. Explain that not submitting to Mom's authority by refusing isolation requires additional punishment of work on Saturday. The teen receives one hour of work every time they did not listen to Mom or talked back about the predetermined consequence. Saturday work is punishment to remind them that they are required to submit to her authority. No exceptions. When Dad is not home, Mom is the authority. They must respect her as such.

Put Them to Work

Assigning work, beyond normal chores, is an effective punishment/motivator. When Nick hit twelve years old, he began to challenge my wife's authority. She would give him a corrective consequence, and sometimes he would argue.

I always assigned one hour's amount of work for challenging my wife's authority. I did not say, "Go work for an hour," or he would have pulled one weed in that hour. I would say, "You weed from here to here." If he was done early due to working fast, that's great. If it took him four hours, or all day, it was his choice. The key was no freedom until that work was complete. Nick became a machine, realizing that if he worked fast and hard, he could finish in less than an hour.

DIG DEEPER

List the pros and cons below concerning work.

In all labor there is profit,
But idle chatter leads only to poverty. (Proverbs 14:23)

He who gathers in summer is a wise son;
He who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame. (Proverbs 10:5)

That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing. (1 Thessalonians 4:11–12)

Shutdown versus Restriction

Shutdown and restriction are not the same thing. Many parents use restriction for everything, but it should only be used in specific instances.

Shutdown Defined

Shutdown is a punishment for refusing a corrective consequence. At that moment they lose all privileges and remain in shutdown until they accept the consequence. It can take five minutes, five hours, or five days. During shutdown, there is no cell phone, music, TV, games, friends, computer, or cash flow. Their life consists of school, homework, chores, and family dinners. Once they do the consequence correctly, freedom starts again.

Your teen may tell you it's ridiculous. Agree with them. For something that's going to take them a few minutes, they chose to be in their room for three days. But it's *their* choice to obey.

Restriction Defined

Restriction is a corrective consequence related to an offense. It consists of staying home for a designated time, with no friends allowed over.

If your rule is to be home by a certain time, the corrective consequence is two days of restriction. Restriction is a corrective consequence that is tied to not being home by the set time or going to another location without permission. If your child violates the restriction by sneaking out or leaving home, they are put in shutdown for a designated number of days. Freedom is gained when the shutdown is successfully completed.

God wants us to use these incidents of disobedience to train our kids. We are motivated to be consistent because our goal is to form in them the character of a mature adult.

Corrective Consequences List

For kids thirteen and older, use a consequence list. It is the same exact concept, but on a list instead of in a box. My kids grew up with a consequence box, so they were still pulling papers from the box up to their teen years. But when introducing such a box to your thirteen-year-old for the first time, they might say, “What is this baby stuff?”

Be sure to make the corrective consequences age appropriate. If you have several teenagers, they can all use the same list. On that list could be wash your car, vacuum the inside of the car, clean out the refrigerator, or wash five windows of your home inside and out. These corrective consequences are over and above their normal chores, to be given when they break a rule. Think of the spring cleaning you do and put those things on the list. Aim for tasks that take three to fifteen minutes.

When your child breaks a rule, the corrective consequence is doing an item on the list. However, some of your rules may have related corrective consequences such as restriction for missing curfew or losing their phone for two days for breaking a phone rule. For every rule, your corrective consequences are predetermined, either related to the disobedience or not (see Action Plan 2 below).

The consequence list is assigned from the first task to the last, and when they get to the bottom, it starts over. If it's late at night and the consequence is to sweep the back patio, you have the option to assign that task for the next morning or choose the next task from the list that can be done immediately. But do not assign tasks out of order because you know it is the one your child hates most.

~~ACTION PLAN 2~~

Review the following instructions to create a corrective consequence list and discuss it as a couple. Refer to the example list in *Appendix N: Rules and Consequences*. A template is provided in the appendix to create your own family list.

1. Make a list of work projects that are not already part of your regularly assigned chores. These short work projects should not normally be completed on a weekly basis, like spring or fall cleaning projects or things the *parents* do on a regular basis.
2. The consequence work should take approximately three to fifteen minutes.
3. They receive the consequence that is next on the list. Do not go out of order except for special circumstances.
4. Avoid making the list too difficult. Remember this is a training tool to teach them the personal characteristics of a mature adult. This is not the parent getting revenge on their children.
5. This list is used when a related consequence is not assigned to a rule.

6. If you have a strong-willed child, you may need several work projects on the list so your child is not doing a corrective consequence they have recently done.
7. If the child does not perform the corrective consequence satisfactorily, as previously trained, then require your child to do it over correctly or they go to shutdown until they are ready to do it correctly.
8. The parent should initial the box on the list after inspecting the work performed by their child versus putting a check mark that any child can write.
9. When your children have completed the list, start again at the beginning. A parent can always add to the list, but do not add items when disciplining your child. Do it after discussion with the other parent.

Training through Chores

Chores are a powerful training tool to instill a great work ethic and help build character, personal responsibility, and self-control.

Use chores correctly based on these five guidelines:

1. Make chores fair. If your eleven-year-old daughter washes dishes five nights a week and your ten-year-old son mows a small piece of grass once a week, that's not fair. Your son can learn to do dishes, cook, and fend for himself in the kitchen.
2. Make chores age appropriate. Be sensitive about what a child can handle. Asking an eight-year-old to wash your car may be beyond their ability. But they can vacuum.
3. Write down the chores. Just like the rules, chores need to be written down.
4. Put in writing the day and time for completion. If the trash needs to be out Wednesday night because collection is on Thursday morning, make sure the completion time is before their bedtime on Wednesday or even right after dinner. Or *someone* will be up at 5:45 a.m.
5. For example, if you decide the trash must be out by 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, your child gets a corrective consequence if it's not done *before* 7:00. If not done on time, they do it immediately and then do an item from the list. Completion times require them to think for themselves, keep track of time, and say no to other things to do the chore. These instill the character of a mature adult.
6. Train—do not nag. Stop the arguing, nagging, and threatening. Set up your plan and consistently follow through.

ACTION PLAN 3

Create a list of your family chores and the corrective consequences for not doing them right or on time. Review the examples and blank worksheet in *Appendix P: Chore List*.

A note to the perfectionist: no child is going to do it perfectly, so be reasonable about doing it right. Teaching them to do it right would be a good way to begin.

What about Allowance?

Allowance should not be tied to individual tasks. Otherwise, when you ask for help bringing in the groceries, they may ask how much money they get for helping.

If you plan to give them an allowance, think about how many hours of chores they do in a week's period, and come up with a dollar amount that you agree to as a couple. Then give them that money (perhaps five dollars a week) for helping and because you love them. Explain these reasons and that it's their spending money.

Nick always wanted to earn extra money because he always had something he wanted to buy. I would assign dollar amounts to certain projects, not related to his regular chores, as a way for him to earn money over and above his allowance.

Kids need to learn how to work, but don't treat them like slaves. When I needed help with a special project, I would tell my kids in advance when we would work on it. I'd be specific about the day, start time, and duration. Sometimes I would pay them, but other times I would not. It is good to teach children to participate in keeping up the house without expecting to be paid.

The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing;
But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich. (Proverbs 13:4)

Create the Plan

God tells us to train up our children with a gentle reproof (Ephesians 6:4). By formulating plans to be followed both by parent and child, progress can be made in training with a minimum of drama and emotion. Failures along the way can be cleared up quickly through communication, confession, and asking forgiveness.

The training plan includes clearly defined rules *in writing*, a source of corrective consequences (box, list, restriction), and a way to motivate them when rebelling (spanking, shutdown). Consistency is essential.

To gain a deeper understanding of your teens and young adult children, review *Appendix Q: Questionnaire for Teenagers* (to determine their understanding of reaching adulthood) and *Appendix R: Questionnaire for New Adults* (to think through the changes when they turn eighteen).

In the next lesson, we will use the information you have acquired and begin to implement it in your home.

Lesson 11

Starting Over

Starting over is just that. Take the newly acquired truths, tools, and principles of parenting and use them to formulate a new family environment and discipline plan. Throughout this series, God may have revealed the need for change in your current parenting methods and management style by showing you where you are not operating according to His will.

Whenever we read God's Word, His Word also reads us. It reveals our wrong ways and our motives for practicing them.

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

As we obey God by applying biblical truth to our lives, His Word washes us like water, cleaning away all impurities. Like the refiner's fire, God's Word exposes the dross, or things in our lives that do not glorify Him, which He wants to remove. Like a sword, the Word penetrates the hardness of our hearts. Finally, the Word is like good seed planted in our hearts and, when humbly received, grows deep roots and bears fruit for God's glory and the building up of others.

Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper. (Psalm 1:1-3)

Because our homes and families are so important to us, it can be discouraging to face the fact that we have failed in any way. Be encouraged that God's mercies are new every morning.

DIG DEEPER

List God's promises and what they mean to you.

Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.
They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)

But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious,
Longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth. (Psalm 86:15)

Because we have a great, compassionate God who faithfully loves us, we can hope in His promise to be by our side with His great strength, wisdom, love, and healing. God is able and ready to bless our homes, but we must desire it and strive to do all that He requires of us.

As I speak to parents around the United States and abroad, the most common response to this material is, “Why haven’t I ever heard these things before? I’ve been a Christian for twenty years. Why haven’t I understood these verses in application to my relationship with my children?”

Many of you will say, “We need to start over.” While this can be daunting for parents with young children, parents with older children are concerned about those who have already left home. After studying the principles in this series, you may be thinking, *No wonder they’re angry with me. No wonder our relationship is so bad. I can see now how my parenting style affected them.*

If you are discouraged because your kids are teenagers, or you have adult children at home, you may ask, “How can I possibly implement these strategies and tools this late in the game?”

Consider this: God waited until now to expose you to this material. He does not operate in the same time frame we do. Why did God wait until now? Be assured that it is not so you would feel defeated and condemned. In God’s eyes, according to His foreknowledge, this is the right time, the time when He knew you would be ready to change your relationship with your children.

DIG DEEPER

What do these verses say about God’s involvement in our lives?

In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.
(Ephesians 1:11)

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

So even if your children are out of your house, there are some important steps you can take. Obviously you can't bring them back home and start over with discipline. However, when it comes to relationships, every day is a new day, a fresh start.

You should be the one to reach out. And remember, the relationship you had with your own parents will affect the way you relate to your children. When I first came to Christ, one of the most difficult things God asked me to do was forgive my father. It was hard, but it was worth it.

Biblical Steps for Starting Over

To move away from negative, ineffective, and perhaps destructive parenting—and start over—you must follow three steps outlined in God's Word:

1. Confess your sins to the Lord.
2. Ask for forgiveness.
3. Forgive others.

Step 1: Confess your sins to the Lord.

The first step in restoring a right relationship with your children is to confess your own sins to the Lord.

Starting over is to be honest before God by humbly confessing, or admitting, our failures, mistakes, and sins against Him and others. God knows we are sinners. Jesus shed His innocent blood on the cross because all mankind is guilty before God and incapable of saving themselves. When we accept Christ as Savior and Lord, we do not immediately stop sinning. The process of sanctification (separating from sin), whereby we become conformed to the image of Christ, takes place over our entire lifetimes.

FACT FILE

Confess—To agree with God that what you did ignorantly or deliberately was wrong and a sin.

When we confess to God, we are not telling Him something He does not already know. He has known every thought, known every motive, heard every word spoken, and witnessed every action taken in our homes. Prayer is acknowledging that we are dependent on God and are placing our trust in Him. Confession is not simply telling God what we have done, or failed to do, but it is also agreeing with Him that we have been wrong.

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

God cleans the slate, making it possible for us to start over. But notice the "if" clause. We must be willing to come to Him with all our garbage.

Identify what happens when we confess our sins and what happens when we do not.

He who covers his sins will not prosper,
But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)

If I regard iniquity in my heart,
The Lord will not hear. (Psalm 66:18)

I acknowledged my sin to You,
And my iniquity I have not hidden.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah. (Psalm 32:5)

While reading this material, God has likely been bringing to your mind behaviors in your discipline routine that you now realize are sin. Remember, God is not angry with you. He is simply bringing the truth to light at this point so you can change.

You must acknowledge to Him, "I see that it is sin, God. Please forgive me." Every sinful word and activity God has revealed to you (even things you did not do that you should have done), confess them to the Lord. Don't be vague. Try to be specific with the Lord. Remember, the things we did not do, like not leading properly, not disciplining our children, or not being consistent with our discipline, all need to be confessed also.

DIG DEEPER

Describe the result of unconfessed sin. How did the psalmist respond? What was God's response?

When I kept silent, my bones grew old
Through my groaning all the day long.
For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah.
I acknowledged my sin to You,
And my iniquity I have not hidden.

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah. (Psalm 32:3-5)

ACTION PLAN

Describe your failures and confess them to the Lord. Then write a prayer of commitment for change.

The biblical steps for starting over continue in the next two lessons.

Lesson 12

Confession and Forgiveness

The last lesson presented three biblical steps for starting over. To better understand the first step of confessing our sins to the Lord, we must dig deeper into the essentials of confession.

Essentials of Confession

Principle 1: By faith, receive forgiveness for your sin and trust that God made you His child.

DIG DEEPER

What do these verses say about faith?

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. (John 6:37)

FACT FILE

Faith-Pisteuo (Greek). To have faith in, trust; particularly, to be firmly persuaded as to something.¹⁹ This is more than just giving a mental assent, it means to act on what is believed.

Repent—To resolve; to amend one's life as a result of contrition for one's sins; to feel regret for one has done or omitted to do before God. To turn around and go another direction; to change one's mind, will, and life, resulting in a change of behavior; to do things another way.

Principle 2: Repent, or turn from sin, and daily walk in obedience to Christ.

DIG DEEPER

What do these verses say about repentance?

But declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. (Acts 26:20)

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? (Romans 2:4)

I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance. (Luke 15:7)

Seek the Lord while He may be found,
Call upon Him while He is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
Let him return to the Lord,
And He will have mercy on him;
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon. (Isaiah 55:6–7)

Principle 3: After you confess and repent, be accountable to your spouse, pastor, or a godly friend.

As members of the body of Christ, we are told to make ourselves accountable to God and to one another for the purpose of encouragement, protection, exhortation, and correction. By sharing your commitment to change a sinful behavior with another, you bring yourself out of secrecy and open to the support and prayer of someone you can trust. It helps to bring sin into the light.

FACT FILE

Accountability—Subject to giving an account, answerable, a statement explaining one's conduct.

DIG DEEPER

What do these verses say about accountability?

So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. (Romans 14:12)

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (James 5:16)

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. (Galatians 6:1)

Pray the following suggested prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank You for dying on the cross for all my sins. Thank You for Your promise to complete the work You began in my life. Thank You for blessing me with my children. I now understand that they are gifts from You. Forgive me for not treating these children as gifts and for the mistakes I have made in raising them. Help me to put You first in my life, then to love and train Your children according to Your will and ways. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Step 2: Ask for Forgiveness

When starting over, you first confess and seek forgiveness from God, then ask forgiveness from others affected by your words, deeds, or lack of deeds. (This applies to your parenting style.)

God has given spiritual principles to govern us. Whether we are Christians or non-Christians, believe God's principles or reject them, these spiritual principles govern our lives. One such principle is that of forgiveness and reconciliation. God commands us to go to those we have offended, when possible, and be reconciled by humbly asking their forgiveness.

Sadly, parents seldom admit to offenses against their children. These words are rarely spoken: "I was wrong to do this, and I am sorry. Will you please forgive me?" But they are the most powerful words to bring healing and reconciliation between parents and children.

Are you excused if your child is eighteen months and barely talks? No. If you have failed by being angry or yelling in response to childish behavior, you need to explain why you were wrong and ask for forgiveness.

Jesus explained that when you are bringing your gift to the altar (today this would mean coming to God to praise, serve, or ask for His blessing) and the Holy Spirit brings an issue or offense to your mind concerning another individual (in this case, your family), you are first to restore that relationship. This shows just how important it is to God that we be reconciled to one another. He is saying that good favor with Him is related directly to our relationship to others.

Knowing this, we need to clear offenses quickly. With practice, you will find that this lifestyle brings blessing and peace.

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

The word *go* is an imperative verb, a command. When we know we have sinned against our children, we must go to them and seek forgiveness. Notice that *going* is not conditional. There is no “if” clause. The Enemy and our own flesh will fight us and provide many excuses for not following God’s plan.

In the verse above, God identified four requirements:

1. To properly worship Him, you need to have a clean heart concerning others. He places a high priority on relationships.
2. The sole responsibility of reconciliation is on you, not the one offended.
3. God expects you to act as soon as possible.
4. Clear up the offense first, then come back and worship Him.

When you carry this out, you are not only being obedient to the Lord, but you are bringing healing between you and your child. God works in both of you when confession is made and forgiveness given. It is supernatural.

ACTION PLAN

Write a prayer asking God for the strength to practice forgiveness daily.

Change Is a Process

This process will become easier as you practice it and begin to experience the blessing of training your child God’s way. As you confess sin and repent, your conscience will become more sensitive and your ability to walk in righteousness will increase. Following God’s plan will give you power, and your sinful behavior will decrease as you gain self-control and learn to respond in love.

“Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath.
(Ephesians 4:26)

Anger is natural but does not necessarily lead to sin. And if it does, we need to practice the process of seeking forgiveness daily. Simply go to the person you offended, state the offense(s) specifically, and ask for forgiveness. "Please forgive me for yelling. Please forgive me for saying those harsh words. Please forgive me for not being consistent."

Angry outbursts are traumatic and often embarrassing. So we allow our sinful behavior and growing bitterness to continue because we do not want to revisit the problem. When God says, "Do not let the sun go down," He means we are not to even let our anger last longer than one day. We must clear up the pain and havoc we create within that same day. By doing this, we set ourselves free as well as the offended person.

Every time you yell at your kids, it is like slicing their hearts with a knife. If you do not ask for forgiveness and apply the salve of healing (which is asking for forgiveness), infection will set in, then resentment, and then revenge. You may have kids who are already angry, bitter, and hurt because you have sliced them over and over again and never applied the salve of forgiveness.

When you ask for forgiveness, you are giving the medicine God provides for their torn heart, and you are beginning the healing process. This is so important. If we do not practice this daily with our children, it will hinder our own spiritual growth and transformation. If we choose not to, then we can become one of the Enemy's greatest tools to harden our child's heart. And the seeds of discipleship and discipline will not penetrate the heart and take root.

There is absolutely no justification for our sinful behavior. We must take full responsibility.

Lesson 13

Offering Forgiveness

As we learned in the last two lessons, starting over begins with confession and asking for forgiveness. The third and final step before moving forward is forgiving others.

Step 3: Forgive Others

We need to forgive, and this definitely includes our children. You may be thinking, *What about when my kids hurt me?* You may still be angry at your son for taking the car on a joy ride that cost \$800. Or at your daughter who says you are ruining her life and she hates you.

When it comes to forgiveness, the measuring device is how much Christ has forgiven us (Colossians 3:13). We cannot measure how much He has forgiven and continues to forgive.

DIG DEEPER

What does God say about forgiveness? Is there any condition regarding your hurt feelings?

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. (Colossians 3:12–13)

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

Choose to Forgive

You are Christ's minister to His children and, as such, you must have the mindset of continuous forgiveness. Just let it go today, whatever it is. Some of the mistakes our kids make can be big ones, and they can be costly. But you must let it go. It is a choice, an act of obedience to God. Do not wait until you feel like it.

Our kids have a fallen nature and are capable of sin. Because we are their God-ordained authority, childhood rebellion is often directed at us. Because we love them and are responsible for their well-being, their sin hurts us. But we must daily apply the principle of forgiveness and reconciliation toward our children.

When we take our children's failures personally, when we refuse to forgive and forget their mistakes (even if they have made the same mistake dozens of times), we are being foolish. As parents of growing children, we must keep the right perspective and treat their failures in the same way as when they were learning to walk. They need to be supported, steadied, and encouraged—not discouraged for learning.

As we have learned, a child's disobedience must be corrected with training: rules, corrective consequences, and punishment (when necessary). But we also face the challenge of cultivating a loving parent-child relationship by forgiving them for their foolish or rebellious behavior. Since love is the greatest motivator, it will lead a child to respond to your authority.

Our home is a training ground, and *parenting is a ministry*. We are serving God as we minister and train up His children. Forgiveness is a nonnegotiable requirement. Some kids are naturally more sensitive and may seek your forgiveness, while others plow through life with no apparent concern for the feelings of others. Regardless of the personality, your actions and instruction can lead either type of child to godly maturity. And as we are training our children, God is training us. Transformation is sometimes a painful process. If we trust in Him, God will use the disappointments and challenges we experience from our children's failures and mistakes to conform us to His image.

DIG DEEPER

What do these verses say about forgiveness?

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.
(Mark 11:25–26)

And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)

Four Essentials of Forgiveness

Principle 1: Forgiveness does not keep a record of wrongs.

Once you forgive others, including your children, you cannot keep a record of the wrongs you have suffered.

[Love] keeps no record of wrongs. (1 Corinthians 13:5 NIV)

This means you cannot continuously bring up your children's failures. Some parents constantly bring up things that happened in the past, which is destructive and not true forgiveness. If you have that bad habit, it is important to get rid of it. With your new parenting perspective, tools, and strategies, you have learned to discipline in the moment and not drag up the past.

Self-Examination 1

Has this been a practice of yours? If so, write a prayer of confession. Ask God to change your heart and convict you when you bring up the past.

Principle 2: Forgiveness eliminates gossip.

Do not gossip to others about your children's failures or sins. Obviously it is acceptable to discuss discipline issues between husband and wife, but not in front of your kids. It would also be appropriate to talk privately with your pastor or a counselor who is helping you.

If your child has been misbehaving throughout the day, Mom should not greet Dad at the door and immediately blurt out, "You won't believe what happened today . . ." Instead, establish a time for Mom to share how the day went, but not in front of the children.

One day, my wife and daughter had a bad day homeschooling together. When I came home that night, I could tell it had been rough. Later that evening, my wife explained all the details of what had taken place and how she had handled the problems.

At bedtime that night, as I prayed with Katie, she said to God, "I pray that Mommy and I have a good day tomorrow."

I kissed her and said, "Yeah, I heard you had a rough day."

She was surprised. "You know?"

"Of course I know," I said.

I could see her thinking. "Is she mad?"

I merely said, "I bet you're going to have a better day tomorrow. I love you, honey," gave her a kiss, and walked out.

The situation was handled, and Katie never felt the embarrassment of hearing her mom lay out all her shortcomings.

Self-Examination 2

Do you share your children's faults and failures with friends or other family members, seeking self-pity or to expose their sin (gossip)? If so, write a prayer to ask God for forgiveness. Then ask forgiveness of those whom you gossiped to, and explain that it was wrong for you to share those things.

DIG DEEPER

What do these verses say about what we are to speak?

All the words of my mouth are with righteousness;
Nothing crooked or perverse is in them. (Proverbs 8:8)

Whoever guards his mouth and tongue
Keeps his soul from troubles. (Proverbs 21:23)

A wholesome tongue is a tree of life,
But perverseness in it breaks the spirit. (Proverbs 15:4)

Principle 3: Forgiveness does not dwell on offenses.

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

When someone offends you, do not let it fester into a bitter feeling toward them. Let it go, and if you cannot, God says go to them in humility, seeking reconciliation. This also applies to our children. Do not allow their past mistakes to create your current attitude. True forgiveness produces a parental attitude of hoping for, praying for, and even expecting the best from a child, not anxiously waiting for the next mistake to occur.

If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.
(Romans 12:18)

Your children may express or harbor deep-seated bitterness and anger toward you. You may need to face an angry teenager. Despite your best intentions, they may not cooperate when you ask for forgiveness. You need to reach out to your children, but do not expect them to say, “Okay, thanks,” and embrace you. They are going to watch you and test you. This is normal. Seek God’s grace to be patient and loving.

ACTION PLAN

If you have a child who is harboring bitterness or resentment toward you, write an intercessory prayer to God, that He would soften their heart and bind the work of the Enemy.

Commit this to prayer daily.

Principle 4: Forgiveness is granted without limitation.

Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”

Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.” (Matthew 18:21–22)

As ministers, we can never stop forgiving our children. We must have a mindset that we will continuously forgive them, no matter what they do, even when they deliberately hurt us. Our job is to love and train them. Yes, it is hard. Standing on God’s Word and calling on the power of the Holy Spirit is essential—and the only way we will succeed.

Parenting is difficult. It is certainly not for cowards.

Lesson 14

Family Meeting

Now it is time to make reconciliation, to explain to your kids what you have learned. In a two-parent family, the husband and wife should meet first to pray over and agree upon the rules, corrective consequences, appropriate punishments, and chores for each child—and *write them out*.

You are not doing this out of frustration with your children's behavior and attitudes, or because you are sick of the chaos. You are doing this because it is God's will. He has revealed His truth and His desire for your family, so you are making changes in response to what you have learned.

If one of your children has a serious relationship problem with either parent, both parents should meet individually with that child before the family meeting takes place. Otherwise, if you meet with the whole group first and begin to explain what you are going to do, that particular child's attitude may dampen the response of the other children.

Open this individual meeting with prayer, then humbly acknowledge the past problem, and seek reconciliation with that child by asking for their forgiveness for the mistakes you have made. Be specific. Dad should start. Mom goes next. Then give your child an opportunity to respond. However, do not be upset if they remain silent.

Be Prepared

Make sure you have your rules, corrective consequences, appropriate punishments, and chore lists written out before you set up a family meeting. Provide a copy to each of your children, except for kids who cannot yet read. Simply show your younger kids the lists.

I have had many reconciliation meetings in my office. I love seeing the tears and unity that God brings in those meetings, how the Holy Spirit blesses them. But it does not always go down that way. Many times the child does not respond positively right away. And that is okay.

First, begin the meeting with prayer, asking God for His help and guidance in your home. Fathers, lead the prayer, even if you have never prayed in front of your kids before. Yes, you will probably freak them out, but do it anyway. Prove to them that you are asking for God's help to make these changes.

Second, apologize to your children as a group. Ask them to forgive you for your mistakes, your sins, and your lack of understanding of proper parenting thus far. Even if you have already apologized to one of the children individually, do so again so your other children see it. Asking forgiveness again, collectively, shows humility. And the other kids probably saw you hurt them with your behavior. Your acknowledgment in front of all the kids emphasizes your sincerity.

It could sound like this: "Some things have been brought to Mom's and my attention, things that we've been doing wrong as parents. We already sat down with Josh and asked him to forgive us

for what we've been saying and doing to him. But we want to say this to all of you kids, for the yelling and the inconsistency, we're sorry."

Third, give your children an opportunity to voice their feelings, but do not require it. If they share anything, Dads, continue to ask forgiveness for any specific sins the Lord reveals through them. Moms, be willing and ready to ask for forgiveness also. Remember, Dads, you are leading this discussion and keeping things peaceful.

Lastly, introduce your children to the new plan for discipline, fully explaining your reasons and motives for this new way of parenting. Explain the rules, the purpose of corrective consequences, and how and why punishment will take place. Review the chore list along with the consequences. Make sure you communicate that these changes are not taking place because they have been bad. You are not suddenly enforcing martial law.

Review lesson 8, "Principles of Spanking," and lesson 9, "Positive versus Corrective."

Guidelines for Explaining Discipline

The following guidelines will help you prepare for your meeting. Review the lessons to familiarize yourself with the principles as you determine what you plan to say. Ask God for wisdom as you prepare. Create your own notes as needed.

1. Explain that discipline is biblical, and God is holding you accountable for the way you train up your children.
2. Explain the difference between corrective consequences and punishment and the reasons for each. (See lesson 4.)
3. Explain the definition of a mature adult. Then explain that your God-given responsibility is to lovingly train them to become those mature adults. (See lesson 2.)
4. Explain that the family is a team, and everyone needs to work together so the home will be a refuge and a place of peace for all family members.
5. Explain the need and your desire for weekly family Bible study. Let them know the day and time it will take place. (See volume 3, lesson 10 for "Seven Steps for a Weekly Bible Study.")

ACTION PLAN

Write the following definitions in your own words. If married, do this together. Do not rush through this. You need to clearly explain God's parenting plan to your children. Review lesson 2 as needed.

Morals and values

Personal responsibility

Self-control

Family Bible Study

Doing a weekly Bible study will help your family start over. If possible, have one for your kids ages five to ten and a different one for the older kids. In some homes, mothers work with the younger children while fathers do devotions with the older ones. But be careful, fathers. Do not use this as an opportunity to pass the whole thing off Mom. You are the priest of your household. You must take that responsibility very seriously. Fulfilling your role as the spiritual leader is one of your wife's companionship needs and a command to you from God (Ephesians 6:4).

My wife homeschooled our daughter, and Bible study was part of their daily routine. I would go over the Bible study with her almost every day at our prayer time in the evening. I also did a weekly Bible study with my children until they left our home.

Making the Transition

Post the rules and discipline list in an essential area of your home, like the kitchen, but not in plain sight (on the refrigerator). Your kids' friends may come over and ask about it, which could make your kids uncomfortable. Small kids do not care where you post it, but when they get older, they are more sensitive about such things.

Put it inside a kitchen cabinet, drawer, or closet, and give the kids their own copies. Your teenagers will probably not want to post it in their room. Do not force it. Simply give them a copy. They will probably lose it or throw it away, which is why you post your own copy.

Be forewarned that if you have had little structure in your home prior to this, your children will not jump for joy at your new plan. Give some grace on enforcing your discipline for the first week or so. If you have allowed arguing and debating in the past, let them slide a little on completing chores. It will take time to break bad habits. Let them know they get one reminder each day for the next five days, but then there will be no more reminders.

If you have allowed arguing to go on for a long time, you will need to provide additional coaching. Now that you have defined respect and implemented appropriate corrective consequences, you could stop a conversation that becomes heated by calmly saying, "Hold on, honey. I know this is something we used to do, but remember this is an area of disrespect. I'm warning you right now

to pull it together.” Then, if they continue, you need to follow through and give them the predetermined corrective consequence.

Allow the grace period. But after five days, remind them that they will get no more warnings.

Reevaluate as Needed

Once the new system has been running for a while, you may discover that some of your rules and disciplines are unfair or too harsh. Be sensitive to God’s guidance as you evaluate how the system is working.

Parents contact me often, trying to decide what is appropriate and what is not. A father of a seventeen-year-old asked if 9:00 p.m. was an inappropriate bedtime. I told him that’s pretty early for his age and asked the son how late he wanted to be up. When the son asked for ten o’clock, his dad thought that was okay. I told them it was good to change the rule.

If the kids are strenuously objecting, and you think the rule may be too harsh, seek the Lord and get some counsel. Fathers, be ready to listen and consider your wife’s input. If you decide the rule is too harsh, change it. Remember, your family is a team.

Periodic Family Meetings

Have a follow-up meeting every two months for the next six months. It is important to get their feedback. You might need to tighten up areas that have begun to slide back into old habits. Come together as a family and discuss these things. However, do not make this a time of negotiation. You are still in charge.

It is also vital for husband and wife to communicate regularly about how things are progressing, like when my wife told me about her rough homeschooling day with Katie and how she had resolved it. But remember, Mom, do not blast Dad the minute he walks in the door with all the bad things that happened that day. The house is supposed to be a refuge for everyone. Discuss with him when is the best time to present the information.

Examine Yourself Often

Parents need to continually evaluate personal progress. First, is Jesus still the cornerstone of your strong foundation? As you know, your spiritual foundation (daily devotional time) is the most important aspect of fulfilling your job as a minister.

Second, continue to be aware of the quality of your relationship with each child. Each one is unique and requires assurance and discipline geared toward their specific personality needs. Never compare your child to anyone else.

Third, evaluate your progress in the following areas:

- Are you responding in love or in anger?
- Are you communicating love by giving time and proper affection?
- Are you discipling faithfully?

- Is your system of discipline based on God's management style?
- Are you working as a team?
- Are you staying consistent with the training plan?

If you are unsure about any of these principles, go back through the lessons for a refresher. It is important to evaluate because if even one gets out of order, the plan can start unraveling. To effectively evaluate how you are doing, review *Appendix S: Parent Self-Evaluation*.

Final Exhortation

Remember that God blesses obedience. By consistently applying the principles you have learned, you will bring His intervention right into your home. You will begin to understand His ways and be so tuned to God's will that you can hear Him speaking to you about how your home should work, what rules you should have, and the specific needs of each child.

God desires that you succeed in training up your children in the way they should go. It is my deepest hope that the principles and tools you have learned in this series will assist you in achieving that goal. Remember from volume 1, God does not do by miracle what He has called you to do by obedience.

Please visit our website, FDM.world, for additional information and materials or to contact us. This series includes workbooks and videos to help you implement these principles. A leader's guide is also available for small or large groups.

Now go and minister to your children. They truly are gifts given to you by God. And begin to pray about discipling others in the things you have learned.

Appendix Resources

These appendices are included as additional resources. They are found throughout all four volumes, but not all appendices are included in each volume. If you wish to review a specific appendix, find where it is located in the list below.

Appendix A: Parent Commitment Letter	Volume 1
Appendix B: Committing Your Life to Christ	Volume 1
Appendix C: Developing Daily Intimacy with God	Volume 1
Appendix D: Recommended Books	Volumes 1 & 3
Appendix E: Trust and Forgiveness	Volume 2
Appendix F: Effective Listening Self-Evaluation	Volumes 2 & 4
Appendix G: Improving Your Loving Communication	Volumes 2 & 4
Appendix H: Showing Love to Your Child	Volume 2
Appendix I: Essentials for Single Parents	Volume 3
Appendix J: Parenting the Blended Family	Volume 3
Appendix K: Leading a Child to Christ	Volume 3
Appendix L: Inappropriate Entertainment	Volume 3
Appendix M: Disciplining Behavior	Volume 4
Appendix N: Rules and Consequences	Volume 4
Appendix O: Positive Reinforcement	Volume 4
Appendix P: Chore List	Volume 4
Appendix Q: Questionnaire for Teenagers	Volume 4
Appendix R: Questionnaire for New Adults	Volume 4
Appendix S: Parent Self-Evaluation	Volume 4
Appendix T: Glossary	Volumes 1–4

Appendix F

Effective Listening Self-Evaluation

Complete this self-evaluation to help you become more aware of your listening habits. Answer each question thoughtfully and honestly.

Communication Habits Revealed

#	Do You Do the Following?	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 listen?				
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?				

Communication Habits Revealed (continued)

#	Do You Do the Following?	Most of the Time	Frequently	Occasionally	Almost Never
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?				
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	Assume 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?				

Communication Habits Revealed (continued)

#	Do You Do the Following?	Most of the Time	Frequently	Occasionally	Almost Never
29	Restate instructions and messages to be sure you understand correctly?				
30	Have concern about why your child feels the way they do?				

After answering the thirty questions, complete the scoring index on the next page.

Effective Listening Self-Evaluation Scoring Index

Circle or highlight 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
Subtotal				

Calculate your subtotals at the bottom, and then add them together for your grand total. Determine your listening level on the next page.

GRAND TOTAL _____

Listening Level

Write your score on the appropriate line below to determine your listening level.

110–120: Excellent Listener _____

99–109: Above Average Listener _____

88–98: Average Listener _____

77–87: Fair Listener _____

<77: Poor to Very Poor Listener _____

After determining your listening level, you may need to identify areas to change. Complete the companion worksheet next in *Appendix G: Improving Your Loving Communication*, which should be used with this self-evaluation when you see unloving communication being exhibited.

Remember: A true disciple of Christ is not simply trying to acquire intellectual knowledge. A true disciple invests himself or herself to learn and to live according to the principles God teaches in His Word. Your investment to learning and living according to the principles God reveals to you through this material will transform your life as God desires.

Appendix G

Improving Your Loving Communication

Complete individually, then review and discuss as a couple if married.

After completing *Appendix F: Effective Listening Self-Evaluation* and totaling your score, list by priority the areas you need to change.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Review what love is in volume 2, lessons 4–10. List by priority any unbiblical communication habits you have been practicing in your home. Pray for God’s grace and strength to change these.

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

Reconciliation

If you believe you have not been demonstrating loving communication to your children (or another person), 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.

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

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

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

3. Go to your child/children and make an age-appropriate confession.

For example, "I love you, but I know I have not been showing you that love with my words. I have been 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.

Commitment

Write a prayer of commitment to seek the Lord for His power to change these areas and to become the parent God desires.

Appendix M

Disciplining Behavior

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. This appendix will help you get a better perspective on how to deal with your children's bad attitudes. What to do and what *not* to do.

We must allow our children to feel the way they feel. After all, God gave us our emotions.

Be angry, and do not sin. (Psalm 4:4)

Getting to the Heart

Behavior is something we do or don't do, by either breaking a rule or not doing what is expected of us. Behaviors can be changed through discipline/training, which is a corrective consequence.

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

A rebellious heart is a miserable heart. It has no peace, joy, contentment, or lasting pleasure—all by God's design. If you know 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:

- You allow a child's bad attitude to make you angry or resentful. You misrepresent God in the way you treat your child.
- You allow the child's bad attitude to rob you of your inner peace.
- You allow the child's bad attitude to dictate how you follow through with your agreed corrective consequence—or you add to it.

Some children use their feelings as a form of manipulation or revenge. They try to manipulate parents so they will not follow through with corrective consequences. Kids may even attempt to guilt the parents into allowing them to do something they would not normally permit them to do.

Other children know it bothers their parents if they exhibit a bad attitude, which often prompts them to continue this behavior. Our sin nature is 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.

FACT FILE

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

Behavior—The act or manner of behaving.

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

Revenge—To inflict injury in return for an insult.

When we become angry, it gives our children satisfaction that is damaging to their character development, your faith, and your authority. It is important to not show any emotion when correcting our children or giving a corrective consequence. Stay to the overall discipline plan. If you don't respond in the way they want, 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, or slamming the door, then you follow through with a corrective consequence for *that* behavior, not the attitude.

The Lord has instructed us to train up our children, not inflict injury in reaction to their childish and foolish choices. If our attitude is one that wants to get even with them or hurt them in some way because they 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 when giving them a corrective consequence, you should repent immediately and ask for forgiveness from both your child and the Lord.

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

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.

Training = Discipline (which is a corrective consequence)

Disciplining Behavior: Parent Discussion Homework

First, review and discuss together (if married) the “Train Behaviors—Not Attitudes” section in volume 4, lesson 5.

List what you believe are the typical bad attitudes you see manifested in each of your children. (You may each 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 the *behaviors* that may stem from these attitudes.

Child's Name:

Child's Name:

Child's Name:

Child's Name:

Discuss together as husband and wife how what you have learned might change any of the rules you have already established. Would you change any? Why or why not? Make notes if desired.

Appendix N

Rules and Consequences

Children of all ages need clearly defined rules and consequences. Ask God to give you wisdom as you create your family list. We have included some examples here and a template on the next page to create your own. Prayerfully consider what is best for your family, and adjust individual rules based on your children's ages and levels of responsibility.

Rule 1: Respect one another at all times.

Consequence: Draw one item from the consequence box or list.

Rule 2: No physical fighting or verbal arguing.

Consequence: Draw one item from the consequence box or list. If physical, add a half day room restriction.

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

Consequence: Wake at 5:00 a.m. the following morning or go to bed a half hour early.

Rule 4: Clean up your own messes right away.

Consequence: Draw one item from the consequence box or list and clean up the mess.

Rule 5: Return home by the specified time from an approved outing.

Consequence: Home restriction for two days.

Rule 6: Cell phone privileges until 8:00 p.m. (for younger ages with approval).

Consequence: No phone privileges for two days.

Rule 7: Cell phone to be off at school, while driving a car, when doing homework, and between 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

Consequence: No cell phone privileges for three days. (If you do not physically keep the phone, you can check the cell phone bill for the times the phone was being used.)

Rule 8: Any inappropriate use of cell phone texting, photos, or videos. (Discuss more details with older children.)

Consequence: Loss of text, photo, and video capability on cell phone for a predetermined amount of time.

Rule 9: Gaming privileges until 9:00 p.m.

Consequence: No gaming privileges for two days.

Rule 10: Room to be cleaned before leaving for school and by 11:00 a.m. on weekends: beds made, extraneous items off the floor, and clothes put away.

Consequence: Draw one item from consequence box and clean room.

Rules and Consequences: Our Family's List

Rule 1: _____

Consequence: _____

Rule 2: _____

Consequence: _____

Rule 3: _____

Consequence: _____

Rule 4: _____

Consequence: _____

Rule 5: _____

Consequence: _____

Rule 6: _____

Consequence: _____

Rule 7: _____

Consequence: _____

Rule 8: _____

Consequence: _____

Rule 9: _____

Consequence: _____

Rule 10: _____

Consequence: _____

Rules and Consequences:

Corrective Consequence List

This is a sample consequence list for teens. Use it as is or create your own using the next page.

Corrective Consequence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Vacuum a specified room(s).										
2. Clean all bathroom mirrors.										
3. Clean bathroom sinks, tubs, and showers.										
4. Clean the toilets.										
5. Clean behind the couch and TV.										
6. Clean up after dog in backyard.										
7. Sweep back patio.										
8. Pull weeds in front yard for 15 minutes.										
9. Mow the backyard.										
10. Water the front yard for 15 minutes.										
11. Wash four windows inside and out.										
12. Wash the car.										
13. Vacuum inside of car.										
14. Sweep the garage.										
15. Clean out the refrigerator.										

Rules and Consequences:
Corrective Consequence List Template

Corrective Consequence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.										
2.										
3.										
4.										
5.										
6.										
7.										
8.										
9.										
10.										
11.										
12.										
13.										
14.										
15.										

Appendix O

Positive Reinforcement

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. Review and discuss as a couple if married.

- 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 or affirmation.
- 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.

Appendix P

Chore List

This is a sample chore list for any age group. Use it as is or create your own using the next page.

Chore 1: Feed the dog.
 Day and time: Every day by 5:00 p.m.
 Child's name: _____
 Consequence: Consequence box or list

Chore 2: Take out the trash.
 Day and time: Wednesdays by 6:00 p.m.
 Child's name: _____
 Consequence: Consequence box or list

Chore 3: Empty the dishwasher.
 Day and time: Every day by 7:00 p.m.
 Child's name: _____
 Consequence: Consequence box or list

Chore 4: Load the dishwasher.
 Day and time: Every day by 7:00 p.m.
 Child's name: _____
 Consequence: Consequence box or list

Chore 5: Clean the bathroom.
 Day and time: Saturdays by 5:00 p.m.
 Child's name: _____
 Consequence: Consequence box or list

Chore 6: Mow the grass.
 Day and time: Saturdays by 5:00 p.m.
 Child's name: _____
 Consequence: Consequence box or list

Chore 7: Vacuum and dust the family room.
 Day and time: Saturdays by 8:00 p.m.
 Child's name: _____
 Consequence: Consequence box or list

Our Family's Chore List

Chore 1: _____ Day _____ Time _____

Child's Name: _____ Consequence: _____

Chore 2: _____ Day _____ Time _____

Child's Name: _____ Consequence: _____

Chore 3: _____ Day _____ Time _____

Child's Name: _____ Consequence: _____

Chore 4: _____ Day _____ Time _____

Child's Name: _____ Consequence: _____

Chore 5: _____ Day _____ Time _____

Child's Name: _____ Consequence: _____

Chore 6: _____ Day _____ Time _____

Child's Name: _____ Consequence: _____

Chore 7: _____ Day _____ Time _____

Child's Name: _____ Consequence: _____

Chore 8: _____ Day _____ Time _____

Child's Name: _____ Consequence: _____

Appendix Q

Questionnaire for Teenagers

Choose an appropriate time when your teen is in a relaxed mood, possibly at dinner or while playing a game together, to ask them the following questions. *Be casual, not intense.*

Do not simply hand your children the questionnaire to complete on their own. You may have to prod them a little. For example, if they answer question 3, “I don’t know,” press them by asking, “What are you doing at your age right now, and what is important to you?”

Remember to give them time to answer. Don’t tell them what *you* think they should answer, and absolutely do not belittle them.

1. What does the term *adolescence* mean?
2. When does adolescence begin and end?
3. The years between ages thirteen and eighteen are a time to be doing what?
4. What is your definition of a mature adult, and when does someone become a mature adult?
5. What do you think you are currently doing that is helping you become a mature adult?
6. What role do your parents play in your life right now?

Appendix R

Questionnaire for New Adults

This questionnaire reveals the parents' reality versus the child's possible delusion. The questions are designed for discussion with your child just prior to his or her eighteenth birthday and for parents who have a child over eighteen living at home. They are most effective when discussed in a relaxed setting.

The purpose is to stimulate your child to think and to encourage a more adult relationship with your child as they enter 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.

Set a date and time to meet with your child to discuss these questions. First, ask the questions to your child and listen intently to their answers. Be careful to not make your child feel uncomfortable with their answers, and do not encourage them to answer how they think you want them to. Once they have answered all questions, share your answers (reality) with them. Discuss the differences between your answers, and help your child understand the reasons. This should be done in a loving but firm manner to encourage adult responsibility.

1. At eighteen what do Mom and Dad owe you besides their love?
2. Do you believe the reason they help you is because they love you? Please explain.
3. Should they be doing more for you than they are currently doing? Please explain.
4. Do they have the right to require anything of you in return for your continuing to live in their home? Please explain.
5. If you do not agree with something they ask or require of you, what should you do?
6. If you ignore their request and do something they have made clear not to do, what do you think they should do? What should you do?

Appendix S

Parent Self-Evaluation

Now that you have established your parenting structure, which includes the four tools of training enforced in love (lesson 4), you may experience times of defeat or frustration and think 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 this evaluation to discern the true source of the problem, and then review the principles in each workbook. Review and discuss as a couple if married.

Your Spiritual Foundation

- How is your devotional life? Read Psalm 1:1–3. Would you use words like *worshipping, listening, thanking, confessing, or interceding* to describe your daily communication with God?
- Do you read and meditate on 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 (Galatians 5:22–23)?

You must depend upon the Lord. The key is not in your parenting methods, but in a relationship with God. Review *Volume 1, Transformational Parenting* if you are lacking in this area.

Communicating in Love

- Do you listen to your children effectively? Review *Appendix F: Effective Listening Self-Evaluation*.
- Have you been reacting to your children in the flesh or responding to them in love?
- Are there areas where you need to improve in your communication or apologize to your children? Review what love is and is not, found in volume 2, lessons 4–10.

Your communication with and toward your child reflects the value you have placed on him or her. If you are struggling in this area, review *Volume 2, Loving Communication*.

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 each other? How is your management style? Who is the main disciplinarian?
- Are you sticking to your rules and using only the predetermined consequences and punishment, or have 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?
- Are you struggling with discipleship in your home? Review *Volume 3, Train Up Your Children*.
- Are you having issues with discipline in your home? Review *Volume 4, Biblical Discipline*.
- Do you need further discipleship in marriage, financial management, or another area? Visit FDM.world for additional resources.

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.

Getting Back on Track

Has God revealed areas in your family relationships where you have drifted? 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.
4. Ask for forgiveness from your children, if necessary.
5. Be willing to forgive your children, just as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Appendix T

Glossary

These definitions are taken from *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language*, G & C Merriam Company, and *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, Spiros Zodhiates, AMG Publishers.

abide: To stay, remain, to continue in a place, to endure without yielding.

accountability: Subject to giving an account, answerable, a statement explaining one's conduct.

admonition: *Nouthesia* (Greek). Warning, exhortation, any word of encouragement or reproof, which leads to correct behavior (Ephesians 6:4). It is the idea of having a corrective influence on someone by imparting understanding.

affectionately longing or fond affection: *Homeiromai* (Greek). To long for someone passionately and earnestly, and, being linked to a mother's love, is intended here to express an affection so deep and compelling as to be unsurpassed (1 Thessalonians 2:8). Ancient inscriptions on the tombs of dead babies sometimes contained this term when parents wanted to describe their sad longing for a too-soon-departed child.

approve: To continually put to the test, examine prior to the approval of your action.

arrogant or proud: To be conceited; feeling or showing self-importance, disregard for others. Prideful; giving oneself high rank, or an undue degree of significance.

attitude: A posture or position; a feeling, opinion or mood.

bears all things: Bears, *stego* (Greek). To hide, to conceal. Love hides the faults of others, covers them up. It keeps out resentment as the ship keeps out the water or the roof the rain.

behavior: The act or manner of behaving.

believing: *Pisteuo* (Greek). Having faith in, or to be firmly persuaded in something. It indicates an attitude of expectant hope.

blamelessly: Faultless, able to stand a critics' scrutiny. As you move along in obedience to God's will, you are transformed into the image of Christ, and your godly behavior becomes evident to others.

brag: To talk about oneself, or things pertaining to oneself, in a boastful manner; to boast.

bring them up: *Ektrepho* (Greek). To nourish, rear, feed (Ephesians 6:4). To nurture, rear, to bring up to maturity such as children, in the sense of to train or educate.

charged, implore, urging: *Martyromenoi* (Greek). Implies the “delivery of truth” and was likely meant to convey the more directive functions of a father. A good father encourages and provides guidance, which the mother does also.

chastening or discipline: *Paideia* (Greek). Correction or training. There is a consequence for every offense; some type of training/correction will follow. Used in Ephesians 6:4.

cheat: To plunder or rob as when plunder is taken in war. Translated as “take you captive” in Colossian 2:8 NASB. In this case it is to rob believers of the complete riches they have in Christ as revealed in the Word, plus His power and intervention.

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 (Deuteronomy 22:6), to cherish with tender love, to foster with tender care. Translated as “tender care” in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 NASB.

communication: The act of communicating is the exchange of thought, message, or information.

confess: To agree with God that what you did ignorantly or deliberately was a sin.

consequences: That which follows from breaking a rule. When you have a rule, there must be a corrective consequence for breaking that rule.

controlling: To exercise power over, to dominate or rule, to restrain, a restraining force.

countenance: *Paniym* (Hebrew). Has the literal meaning of *face* (Genesis 43:31; 1 Kings 19:13) but also means the reflection of a person’s mood or attitude such as being defiant (Jeremiah 5:3), ruthless (Deuteronomy 28:50), joyful (Job 29:24), humiliated (2 Samuel 19:5), terrified (Isaiah 13:8). Scripture shows a bad countenance (Matthew 6:16) and a good one (Psalm 4:6).

defiance: When a child rebels against the authority and the discipline that follows their foolish act of immaturity.

defile: To pollute, render impure; or corrupt.

devoutly: Holy, pious, sacred, dedicated to God. This describes your abiding relationship with Christ. When you are devoted, or dedicated to God, that relationship is the source of a sacred life.

diligently: Perseveringly attentive; steady and earnest in application to a subject or pursuit; prosecuted with careful attention and effort; not careless or negligent.

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

disciple (noun): *Mathetes* (Greek). A student, learner, or pupil. But it means much more in the New Testament. It is a follower who accepts the instruction given to him and makes it his rule of

conduct. In Classic Greek, “an apprentice,” one who not only learns facts from the teacher but other things such as attitudes and philosophies. The *mathetes* could be called a “student-companion,” one who doesn’t just sit in class listening to lectures but rather who follows the teacher to learn life as well as facts and progressively takes on the character of the teacher.

discipleship/discipling: An intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip, and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ. This includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well.

discipleship (direct): Instruction-discipleship is the time you set aside to have devotions (Bible study) with your children. It is a planned activity that involves the family.

discipleship (indirect): Instruction-discipleship occurs when God presents an opportunity for an informal or unplanned discussion of spiritual things. This means the parent is paying attention, seeing those opportunities.

discipline (of children): Instilling character traits of a mature adult (Ephesians 6:4), which are morals, values, personal responsibility, and self-control; training behavior.

discouraged: *Athumeo* (Greek). The root word is *thumos*, which means “violent motion or passion of mind, such as anger, wrath, or indignation.” Adding the *a* (alpha) before it makes it negative, meaning “without” passion; despondent, disturbed in mind, and indicates loss of courage (Colossians 3:21).

edification: *Oikodome* (Greek). To build up for the spiritual profit or advancement of someone else, used to indicate building up a house or structure.

encourage or **comfort:** To inspire, support; console in time of trouble or worry, soothing encouragement designed to cheer up and to inspire correct behavior.

endure all things: To endure, *hupomeno* (Greek), To abide under, to bear up under, suffer, as a load of miseries. Patient acquiescence, holding its ground when it can no longer believe nor hope.

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

exhort: *Parakleo* (Greek). To call to one’s side, to aid; to encourage, admonish, or exhort someone to do something. We are to come alongside our children and help them grow in the things of the Lord.

faith: *Pisteuo* (Greek). To have faith in, trust; particularly to be firmly persuaded as to something. This is more than just giving a mental assent; it means to act on what is believed.

foolishness: Lack of character, deficient in understanding, unwise, brainless, irrational, ludicrous, a lack of judgment.

forsake: To deny. Daily align our priorities to God's Word, which places His will over ours.

gentle: Seemly, fitting; equitable, fair, moderate, forbearing, not insisting on the letter of the law. Expresses that considerateness that looks humanely and reasonably at the facts of a case.

genuineness: *Dokimion* (Greek). Something that has been tested and approved. Used of metals that had been through a purifying process to remove all impurities.

glorify: To reflect, to honor, praise; to give esteem or honor by putting him into an honorable position.

head: The chief or lead person to whom others are subordinate. Metaphorically of persons, e.g., the husband in relation to his wife (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23) insofar as they are one body (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:8), and one body can have only one head to direct it; of Christ in relation to His Church, which is His body, and its members are His members (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Colossians 1:18; 2:10, 19); of God in relation to Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3). God the Father is designated as the head of Christ (Colossians 2:10; Ephesians 1:22).

heart: *Kardia* (Greek). The seat of desires, feelings, affections, passions, impulses; the mind.

heart: *Lebab* (Hebrew). Mind, inner person (will, emotions). The word primarily describes the entire disposition of the inner person.

hurts: Can cause a person to harbor bitterness toward others. Can also affect our relationship with God and His sanctification process in our lives. If we allow a hurt to turn into bitterness, this will affect the grace of God needed to walk and grow spiritually, and it can negatively affect those around us. Hebrews 12:15 says, "Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled."

hypocrite: Someone who acts phony, or is a counterfeit; a man who assumes and speaks, or acts, under a pretend character.

impart: This verb has the idea of sharing something, which one already retains in part.

integrity: Indicates singleness of heart, not double-minded; one who walks according to God's will and exemplifies His righteousness.

justly: With integrity and honesty, just, uprightness of character and behavior, daily desiring to live life according to what pleases God. When you know the Word of God, you can judge what is right and wrong.

kind: *Chrestos* (Greek). To do good; denotes being gentle, merciful, sympathetic, gracious, and good natured in contrast to harsh, hard, sharp, bitter, or cruel. The idea of moral excellence.

knowledge: *Epignosis* (Greek). Thorough participation in acquiring knowledge, and applying it.

longsuffering or patience: To be long-tempered, the opposite of hasty anger; involves exercising understanding and patience toward people. Requires that we endure circumstances, not losing faith or giving up.

love: *Agape* (Greek). The response of God's heart toward unworthy sinners. God's love demonstrated in self-sacrifice for the benefit of the objects of His love, His Son bringing forgiveness to man. God's essential quality seeks the best interests of others regardless of the others' actions; it involves God doing what He knows is best for man and not necessarily what man desires. *Agape* is choosing to love unconditionally.

love: *Phileo* (Greek). The response of the human spirit to what appeals to it as pleasurable. Distinct from *agape* and speaks of esteem, high regard, and tender affection and is more emotional. Friendship love; determined by the pleasure that one receives from the object of that love. *Phileo* is conditional love.

make disciples (verb): *Matheteuo* (Greek). To make a disciple (Matthew 28:19; Acts 14:21); to instruct (Matthew 13:52) with the purpose of making a disciple. It is not exactly the same as "make converts," though it is surely implied. The term *make disciples* places somewhat more stress on the fact that the mind, as well as the heart and the will, must be won for God by instructing new believers on how to follow Jesus, to submit to Jesus's lordship, and to take up His mission of compassionate service. It also involves bringing people into relationship with Jesus as pupils to teacher and getting them to take His yoke of instruction upon themselves as authoritative (Matthew 11:29), accepting His words as true, and submitting to His will as what is right.

manipulation: To control or play upon by artful, unfair, and insidious means, especially to one's own advantage.

meditate: To moan, utter, or growl muttering sounds, like reading half aloud or conversing with oneself, interacting with the text so it would soak into your mind. As a tea bag soaking in water permeates the liquid, so meditating on Scripture permeates our minds. In the biblical world, meditation was not a silent practice.

minister (noun): A servant or waiter, one who oversees, governs, and fulfills.

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

morals: Defined by what is right and wrong from God's perspective.

not rejoicing in iniquity: When you see someone fall into sin or make a mistake, you are not happy or vindictive toward them.

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 or something (1 Thessalonians 2:7).

perfect or mature: *Teleios* (Greek). Goal or purpose; finished, that which has reached its end, term, limit; hence, complete, full, wanting in nothing (Ephesians 4:13).

perfectly trained: *Katartizo* (Greek). To put a thing in its appropriate condition, to establish, equip so it is deficient in no part.

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

personal responsibility: The ability to take care of oneself; to follow through on things you have committed to do, or the things required, without anyone else having to prompt you; taking ownership, being accountable and accepting responsibility for your actions.

power: *Dunamis* (Greek). Dynamic strength or ability to do what only God can do.

punishment: A measured amount of pain to motivate, or the infliction of a penalty. Punishment is part of the overall discipline plan, but it is different from a corrective consequence. Punishment motivates a child to yield to parental authority and accept the corrective consequence.

purpose: An intended or desired result or goal.

react: To act in response to a stimulant or to stimulus, to act in opposition.

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

rebuke: To convict, to prove one in the wrong.

rejoicing in the truth: Having great joy; rejoicing at what is true based on God's promises.

repent: To resolve; to amend one's life as a result of contrition for one's sins; to feel regret for what one has done or omitted to do before God. To turn around and go another direction; to change one's mind, will, and life resulting in a change of behavior; to do things another way.

respond: React positively or favorably.

responding in love: Responding with the inward guidance, love, wisdom, and power of the Holy Spirit.

revenge: To inflict injury in return for an insult.

reward: A great precious value.

rightly dividing: Cutting something straight as you would in carpentry, masonry, or with cutting a piece of cloth to be sewn together.

- rude:** Characterized by roughness; harsh, severe, ugly, indecent, or offensive in manner or action.
- rule:** To rule, manage, lead, shepherd, and guide. By implication this means to take care of something, to be diligent, to practice.
- scourges:** Entails all suffering God ordains for His children, which is always designed for their good. It includes the entire range of trials and tribulations, which He providentially ordains and which work to mortify sin and nurture faith.
- seek and set your mind:** Imperative verbs, indicating the action is a continual process. *Seek* means “to look for and strive to find.” *Set your mind* refers to the will, affections, and conscience (Colossians 3:1–2).
- seek first:** A command to do and never stop (Matthew 6:33).
- seek your own way:** Pursuing what best fits your own interests without any concern of how your actions or ways affect others. Unwilling to receive input, which includes instruction from God’s perspective.
- self-control:** The ability to govern oneself emotionally, physically, and spiritually; the ability to not always yield to the path of least resistance.
- self-seeking:** Doing things in our own way, using ours or this world’s wisdom in making choices.
- shutdown:** Room restriction with no friends, phone, radio, computer, games, or iPods.
- sin of commission:** We sin acting out of our own authority. God says do not do that, and we do it anyway. For example, God says don’t steal (Ephesians 4:28), but we steal.
- sin of omission:** We sin by not doing what is right by God. He commands us to do something, and we decide not to do it or, out of ignorance, we treat our children according to what we feel is best, *not* doing God’s will. For example, God says to forgive, but we refuse to.
- steward:** Overseer; manager; one who acts as a custodian, administrator, or supervisor.
- study:** Imperative verb; a command to do and to continue to do. Denotes a zealous persistence, to be diligent, to make every effort to do one’s best, to be eager and earnest in accomplishing a goal.
- submissive:** *Hopotasso* (Greek). A voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden.
- thinks no evil:** *Logizomai* (Greek). Used as an accounting term, meaning to put things together in one’s mind, to count or add up, to occupy oneself with calculations.
- thoroughly equipped for every good work:** God intends for us to understand His will and be empowered to follow through in obedience.

train up: *Chanak* (Hebrew). To dedicate or set aside for divine service (Proverbs 22:6).

training: *Paideia* (Greek). Chastening, because all effectual instruction for the sinful children of men includes and implies discipline, correction, as the Lord approves (Ephesians 6:4). Discipline that regulates character. Also to cause to grow as desired; to make or become prepared or skilled.

transformed: *Metamorphoó* (Greek). From which we derive the word *metamorphosis*. To change into something entirely different, as a caterpillar to a butterfly.

values: Principles or actions you live by. Your behavior shows what you value most.

voids: Something that has been left out. God has placed within us emotional needs that are as important as our physical ones. If we do not have air to breathe, water to drink, and food to nourish our bodies, we will eventually die. God has placed emotional development needs within every child. If not met, they can cause serious emotional and psychological problems as an adult.

For example, a child has certain developmental emotional needs that must be nurtured through loving authority, with consistent proper discipline. If these needs are compromised or not provided, a void is created within the child. This often occurs because parents do not understand their God-given responsibilities or the extent of their influence for good or bad. Most children cannot identify what is missing—what the void is—but they will instinctively try to fill it with something. A lack of real love and proper discipline can make a child vulnerable to addictions or emotional and psychological problems that lead to destructive behavior. When followed, biblical instruction can produce a healthy relationship with your child and an emotionally healthy person in your child.

wiles: *Methodia* (Greek). From which we derive the word *method*. Indicating craftiness, cunning, and deception. The term was often used of a wild animal that cunningly stalks and then unexpectedly pounces on its prey. Satan's evil schemes are built around stealth and deception.

Endnotes

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About the Author

A fool. A student with dyslexia. A high school graduate with a third-grade reading level. An ignorant husband and abusive father. All described Pastor Craig Caster at one time in his life, but God had a different plan for him. Despite Craig's fear of public speaking, God called him to full-time ministry in 1994. He stepped out in faith without formal education or a seminary degree. He was ordained in 1995 and has since written four books; disciplined many men; counseled hundreds; led countless to Christ; and taught thousands through marriage and parenting seminars, men's retreats, and pastors' conferences throughout the US and internationally. All by the grace and power of God.

Although Craig gave His life to Jesus in 1979, his transformation started when he began to abide in Jesus and His Word daily. He truly believes Jesus desires a close relationship with each one of us. His life is forever changed because he pursues this relationship and is completely dependent on Christ.

Be Encouraged

If you are struggling to trust that God can work in and through your life, be encouraged by Pastor Craig's story. Don't let your past sins, learning disabilities, fear of teaching or speaking, or lack of education stop you from being obedient to the call of God on your life. God desires to make you His disciple, and if you are married or have children, He wants to form you into a spouse and parent who honors Him. His grace is amazing and limitless. He loves you and desires to be glorified through you.

God's Promise to You

Thanks be to God for His abundant promises and provision. Meditate on His promises from the words of "Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ."

To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:1-8)

About Family Discipleship Ministries

Family Discipleship Ministries (FDM), a nonprofit ministry established in 1994 by founder and director Pastor Craig Caster, strives to support, educate, and train the body of Christ to minister to families. To accomplish this goal, FDM offers workbooks, supporting videos, and online materials for individual study, small groups, home-group study, and one-on-one discipleship. They conduct seminars on marriage, parenting, understanding teens, and church discipleship planning.

FDM's ministry goal is to exhort, train, and equip leaders of Christian churches to develop a vision for discipleship and provide biblically solid workbooks to help them minister to their church families. Since 1995, thousands of people have completed the marriage and parenting classes, and hundreds of churches within the US and abroad have ministered to their congregations using FDM materials. Their ministry also helps many families through free online resources found at FDM.world.

FDM actively ministers internationally in countries such as Russia, Ukraine, Cuba, Mexico, Africa, Singapore, Japan, and China. Find out more at FDM.world.