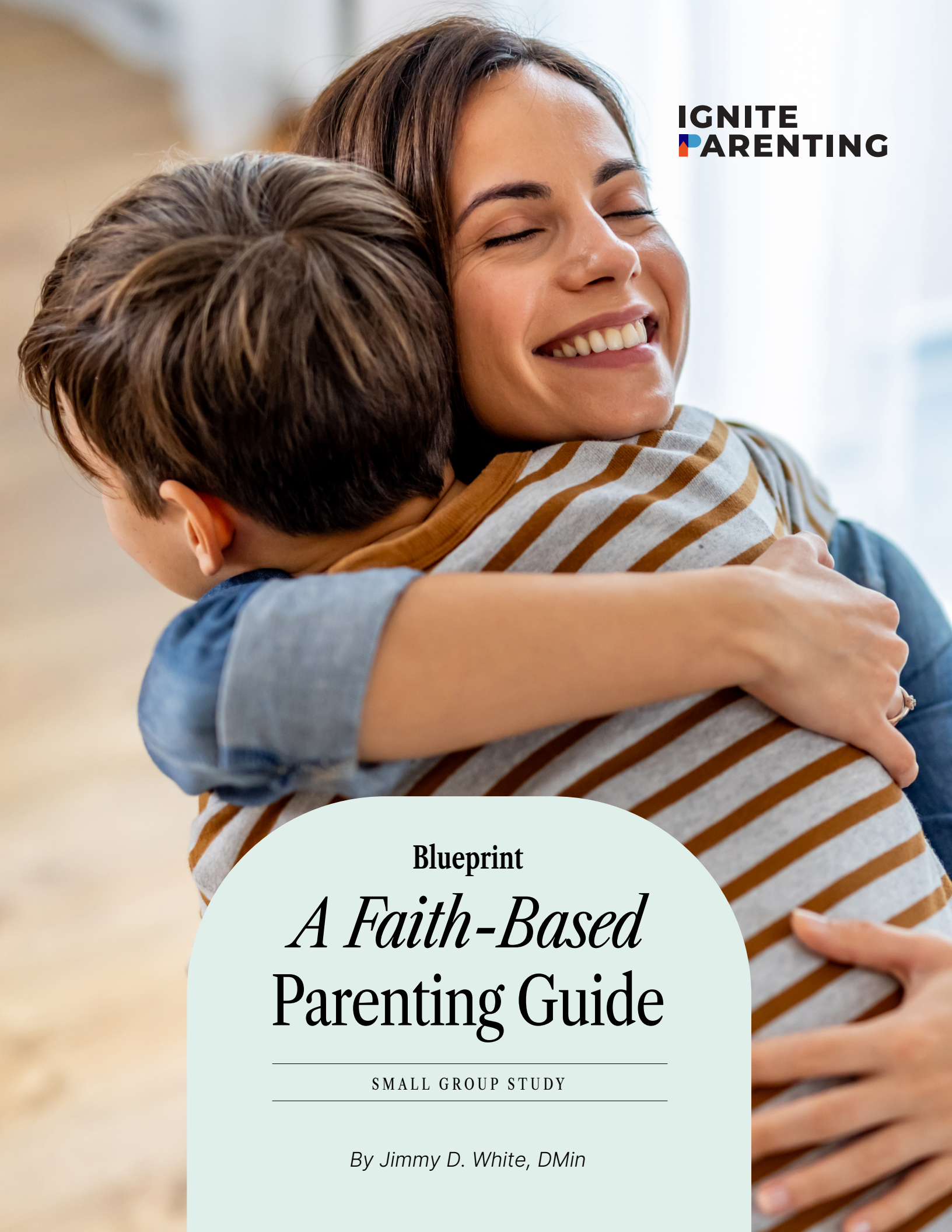


IGNITE PARENTING

Blueprint

A Faith-Based Parenting Guide

SMALL GROUP STUDY

By Jimmy D. White, DMin

A Guide for Parenting *with Purpose*

Ignite Parenting Blueprint has been created to assist every dad, mom, and guardian (caregiver) in becoming a parent with purpose. Becoming a parent is one of the most important responsibilities you will ever receive. Your effectiveness in your role makes a huge difference in the future lives of your children, and they will model your example through how they structure their lives, treat their spouses, serve God, and view themselves as people.

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Your time as a parent can be the most fulfilling time of your life, but parenting takes purposeful intentionality. As a parent, you must seek to discover the individual personality of each of your children and work to bring out the best in them.

Your kids are a precious gift from God, and you are charged with their earthly care. God has also given you the tremendous responsibility of passing down your faith as you nurture and teach your children how to know and love Him. Our goal for **Ignite Parenting** is not just to help you raise great kids but to help you raise kids who become spiritually healthy adults.

Each lesson has four sections. The first section is called **Overview** and gives an introduction to the topic. The second section is called **Getting Started** and helps bring the topic into clearer focus. The third section, called **Digging Deeper**, helps you find purposeful ways to grow as a parent in each topic area. The fourth section is called **Purposeful Parenting Moments**, which is designed to help you deepen your relationship with your children by applying what you've learned. **Ignite Parenting** recognizes that not all relationships are created equal. These action steps are suggestions, and you are encouraged to adjust yours to fit the unique relationship you have with your child.

These lessons have been built using several resources to provide you with an in-depth study without having to purchase multiple materials. However, there are a few recommended tools available for purchase that will help enhance your experience:

- FireBible®: English Standard Version® (www.GospelPublishingHouse.com)
- Journal
- Colored Pencils
- Pen

The goal of this study is to equip you and help you grow in your God-given purpose as a **parent who is ignited by God to raise healthy children**. By building a strong foundation for your own life as a spiritually healthy disciple of Jesus, these lessons will equip you to lead your family boldly through life's storms.

As parents, we are not handed an instruction manual when our children arrive. Many dads and moms fear four things prior to becoming a parent:

- That they will not be a good parent
- That their children will grow up with negative feelings towards them or negative childhood experiences
- That they are ill-equipped and not prepared to raise a child
- That their children will not love them because of their flaws/weaknesses

Ignite Parenting has a passion to build healthy and spiritually mature families. This is a call for parents to stand up and protect their children from negative influences. This is a call for dads, moms, and guardians (caregivers) to sharpen their skills, becoming an army trained and empowered by God to raise the next generation.

In these lessons, you will discover core practices that help you develop the skills needed for a healthy relationship with your children. The goal is for you to use this resource often, measuring your spiritual growth along the way. **Ignite Parenting** does not expect a parent to walk away from this tool and immediately ignite their family. We believe every parent is at a different place in their journey and walks at a different pace. However, each parent, with counsel from a spiritual leader or pastor, should seek out the appropriate next steps as they continue to mature in Christ. **We believe** the Holy Spirit will guide you in how best to use the *Ignite Parenting Blueprint* in your life. As Paul states in Colossians 3:9–10, "You have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self . . . which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator."

The goal is for you to use this resource often, measuring your spiritual growth along the way.

For Group Leaders

As you plan to use this material in a group format, below are some tips to help you get the most from these lessons:

Before the Session

- Determine who will be the group leader. The leader will be responsible for distributing materials, coordinating meeting times, and facilitating discussions.
- Before a session begins, the group leader should read the lesson material and reflection questions as well as the **Purposeful Parenting Moments** section. Many lessons have more content than what can be covered in a single session, so the leader may choose only some of the questions or assign group members specific questions to work through before the next discussion.

During the Session

- The group leader should select individuals to read aloud the **Getting Started** and **Digging Deeper** sections.
- If your group is very large, dividing into groups of three to four people is the best way to work through selected questions from the **Getting Started** and **Digging Deeper** sections. This should last between 30–40 minutes. These groups should also commit to work together throughout the week, month, or other agreed upon time.
- If you've divided into smaller groups, come together again as one large group and discuss two or three of the questions from the **Getting Started** and **Digging Deeper** sections for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Finally, the leader is responsible for encouraging accountability in each group member, sending reminders for completing the reading, journal entries, and **Purposeful Parenting Moments** before each session.

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LESSON 1

A Purposeful Parent Provides *Spiritual Leadership*

Overview

Parents are called to be the spiritual leaders of their home. From humanity's earliest days, God instructed parents to pass down their faith to their children (Deuteronomy 6:6–9). God entrusted parents with this incredible responsibility, knowing that the most prosperous discipleship takes place within the context of family. However, parents must be discipled before they can disciple their children. In this lesson, you will learn how to take the next step in your growth as a spiritual leader and how to continue effectively discipling your children.

Parents are called to be the spiritual leaders of their home.

Getting Started

The spiritual development of family is linked to the spiritualty of the parents or caregivers of the home. You are naturally aware of and provide for the emotional and physical needs of your children; however, from infancy, children also have spiritual needs which must be attended to. If you want your children to be spiritually healthy, you must model healthy spiritual practices in front of them. If you communicate to your children the old proverb of "do as I say, not as I do," you risk losing the respect of your children and your attempts at leadership in the home will be ineffective.

The Bible has much to say about leading by example. Paul instructs Timothy to be an example in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity (1 Timothy 4:12). Paul also urges the church at Philippi to follow his example (Philippians 4:9). For parents, being in right relationship with God is the first step to leading by example. If you are unsure where to start, begin with Scripture. For example, take two to three minutes to read a portion of Scripture each day. Then, take a few minutes to pray, give thanks for the day, bless your family and friends, and present any needs you may have to God.

REFLECTION

- What are some things that can stop a parent from taking on the role of spiritual leader in the family?
- What do you think the impact would be on your children if you were to pursue God and place Him first in your life in ways that were visible to them?

Digging Deeper

What does it mean to be a spiritual leader? As a parent, being the spiritual leader for your family simply means that you do your best to reflect the character of God and strive to help your children know God, love His word, and be Spirit-filled disciples of Christ. You can discover from the Bible that you have a body, soul, and spirit. It is your spirit that is able to communicate and be in relationship with God. Through sin, the world's relationship with God was broken. But God sent Jesus into the world so that relationship could be restored (John 3:16).

As a parent, being the spiritual leader for your family simply means that you do your best to reflect the character of God and strive to help your children know God, love His word, and be Spirit-filled disciples of Christ.

As a parent, when you repent of your sin, believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and decide to follow Him, you are changed dramatically. The Bible describes you as a ***new creation*** (2 Corinthians 5:17). This is when you become spiritually alive. If you are going to lead your family spiritually, successfully pass down your faith, and help your child develop healthy habits rooted in God's word, then placing your faith in Jesus is the starting point.

A parent has a divine command to be the spiritual leader of their family. Being the spiritual leader of a family is not easy, and unfortunately, many parents do not know how to fulfill this role. Often, parents abdicate this role to the child, the school, or the church. Parents who do not fulfill their role as spiritual leaders rob their family of important faith-elements they need for healthy spiritual growth. For example, children need to see their parents living out their faith, hear their parents praying every day, join their parents in studying the Bible, and be taught how to serve like Jesus.

As a parent, you must understand the value of spiritual leadership in the family unit and its impact on a child's life (Proverbs 22:6). While you cannot force anyone in your family to serve God, you can lead your family in the things of God that make the decision to serve God natural,

As a parent, you must understand the value of spiritual leadership in the family unit and its impact on a child's life (Proverbs 22:6).

logical, and easier. Every day, begin to look for opportunities to demonstrate and teach your family small spiritual truths amidst the regular activities of life. Talk about the awesomeness of God that you see in the beauty of flowers in the spring or celebrate the blessings of God as you prepare for Thanksgiving in the fall. These simple moments become crucial in the development of a child's understanding of God and the godly values they apply to their life.

The most important thing you can do individually and as a parent is to love God more than anything or anyone else (Matthew 22:36–38). This is a challenge for all parents. The love a parent feels for their family can be very powerful, and the idea that this love is to be secondary to one's love for God is sometimes difficult to comprehend. As a parent or caregiver, how can you increase your love for God?

The secret may lie in Jesus' words in John 14:15: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." To increase your love for God, you must know and understand His word. The Bible is the revelation of God to humanity, and your love for God will grow in proportion to your knowledge of God as revealed through Scripture. More than simple knowledge, though, is the understanding of God and His commands. Knowing His commandments is important, but having a relationship with the Author is also of great importance.

Love for God is more than just knowing information about God; it is a heart posture. In the same way that friendship grows through intentional and meaningful conversation, our relationship with the Lord grows through prayer and worship. Only then do we truly begin to know His character, His nature, and His desires for us and our family. When you commit to prayer, worship, and reading the Bible, you will fall more in love with Him.



REFLECTION

What a parent loves can be seen in their priorities. Take a moment and honestly reflect on the following five priorities. Put a number (1–5) beside each priority according to how it ranks in your life. This is a time of honest reflection, so be careful not to make your list based off of an expectation.

- [ ] Job
- [ ] Hobbies
- [ ] Friends
- [ ] Family
- [ ] God

Write out some actions you will take to ensure more time is spent with God and reading the word.

Purposeful Parenting Moments

Ignite Parenting recognizes that not all relationships are created equal. These action steps are merely suggestions, and we encourage you to adjust your next step to fit the unique relationship you have with each of your children.

Action Step

Next steps are important. Taking small steps in the right direction over time makes a big difference in helping you grow in your relationship with God, and each step helps you model and hand down your faith.

Over the next week consider:

- Praying daily by yourself and praying with your children (even in the car).
- Reading a few verses of the Bible two to four times a week (increase over time).

If you feel like you are ready for more, we have included a personal growth chart. Use all of it or part of it. The most important step is to remember the old proverb: “The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.”

Look at the example chart below, and commit to writing out and implementing a 30-day personal spiritual growth plan. Once you have completed your plan, make another chart that you can use to lead your family.

Personal Growth Chart

	Growth Question	Growth TRAC
T	**TARGET** What is my growth goal?	**SPIRITUAL** ☐ Cultivate a closer walk with God through consistent and meaningful prayer, Bible study, and Scripture memorization.
R	**ROADMAP** How do I plan to grow? What training, resources, relationships, and experiences will I use as growth steps?	☐ Schedule a personal 30-minute prayer and devotional time Monday–Friday (three to four days a week). ☐ Select a verse to memorize weekly or biweekly. Write it on two index cards/ Post-it notes and place one on the bathroom mirror and one in the car. ☐ Do a character study of one biblical leader—e.g. Joseph
A	**ACCOUNTABILITY** Who will hold me accountable for my growth?	☐ Find an accountability partner to call/text on a weekly basis about my progress. (Be honest. If goals weren't met, ask for their prayer and ideas on how you can meet your goals for the next week.) ☐ Things to share: How consistent has my prayer and Bible reading been this week? (Share the verse(s) you've memorized. What are you learning?)
C	**CHECK-UP** When and how will I evaluate my growth process?	☐ Begin a morning prayer routine ☐ Create a Scripture memorization list

Personal Growth Chart

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A	**ACCOUNTABILITY** Who will hold me accountable for my growth?	
C	**CHECK-UP** When and how will I evaluate my growth process?	

LESSON 2

A Purposeful Parent Guides *Their Family's Spiritual Journey*

Overview

All children should have a personal relationship with God, and as a parent or caregiver, you get to help shape what type of relationship your children will have with Him. For some children, that relationship may already be vibrant and growing; this relationship needs parents who are an encouragement and a support. For others, the relationship may be shallow and malnourished; this relationship needs parents who model healthy spiritual habits and are intentional in teaching their child to better understand God and His word. This lesson will focus on how parents and caregivers, anyone who is caring for a child that is not biologically their own, can gently guide their child's spiritual journey through encouragement, support, purposeful modeling, and daily instruction.

Getting Started

Your family will see many benefits when you take responsibility and lead your children along their spiritual journey. For instance, you will see an increased spiritual understanding in your children (far beyond just knowing basic biblical facts) and strengthened family relationships that are built on the foundation of honoring God. You play an important role in your child's spiritual life; by laying a strong foundation, you are helping your children grow up to be healthy spiritual adults (faithful followers of Jesus). Laying the foundation involves helping kids understand their identity in Christ, and intentionally teaching God's word to develop disciples that have biblically-sound moral values, appropriately deal with the difficulties of life, and realize their God-given purpose.

Two areas of spiritual development where children need guidance most are in spiritual disciplines and prioritizing church involvement. Spiritual disciplines are activities families can engage in to grow spiritually. These activities could consist of nightly prayer as a family, devotions around the breakfast table before school, times of worship on the weekends, or discussing a certain passage of Scripture while riding in the car. Dad, mom, or guardian, as the spiritual leader of the family, you must be the one to initiate and foster spiritual disciplines



As you practice spiritual disciplines together, relationships within your family will be strengthened.

in your children by setting the example; not only are you pursuing your own spiritual growth, but joining your family in times of spiritual discipline. As you practice spiritual disciplines together, relationships within your family will be strengthened.

REFLECTION

- Has your family ever spent time reading the Bible, praying, or worshipping together? Why or why not?
- Describe your family's spiritual life growing up. What things do you want to keep the same for your children and what do you want to do differently?

Digging Deeper

The Bible is filled with wisdom for all ages. As a parent, it is important to make family Bible studies a group activity rather than a lecture. Don't be afraid to discuss or act out Bible stories with your children to help bring God's word to life; read often from the life of Jesus, use the book of Mark, or talk about the importance of the book of James. Be sure to use a Bible translation that is easy to read, and one that your children will understand. Take them on a journey through the Bible. Don't be in a hurry; set aside an amount of time to study, not an amount of Scripture to finish. For example, consider working through a single passage for five minutes, 15 minutes, 30 minutes, or an hour, depending on age and ability.

The discipline of prayer is also well suited for families. Even young children can pray. These prayer times should serve as a **safe** space where all family members can learn to pray, and opportunities should be given for each relative to lead in prayer. Teaching a child to pray is one of the most important things a parent can do. Even some secular research suggests that regular habits of prayer, beginning in early childhood, are linked with improved physical and mental health outcomes for children.[1]

1 Ying Chen and Tyler J VanderWeele, "Associations of Religious Upbringing With Subsequent Health and Well-Being From Adolescence to Young Adulthood: An Outcome-Wide Analysis," *American Journal of Epidemiology* 187, no. 11 (2018): 2355–2364, https://academic.oup.com/aje/article/187/11/2355/5094534.

Prayer is personal communication with God. It seems simple, because it is simple. Prayer is communicating with God and listening to what He speaks to your heart and through Scripture. In the same way that every relationship grows and revolves around communication, so does your relationship with God. The result of regular prayer is a deeper connection to Him. Teach your children to pray with you about the needs of their family and friends. Pray together for your church and the leaders in their lives. Pray for their teachers, coaches, and friends. Model the importance of praying for people by name.

Worship is a very important part of a believer's life and can be defined as giving God the reverence (deep respect) and adoration of which He is worthy. Worship is a posture (position) of our hearts that places God at the center (most important place) of our lives. Our decision to obey and submit each day to His word and His will is an act (form) of worship. Leading your family in worship at home is a great way for you to nurture your family's spiritual journey. Family worship takes many different forms, such as singing together, talking about the goodness of God, or taking communion. It should be simple and fitting for all ages of children in the home. All family members should attend and be engaged in worship activities. Family worship times should allow for open discussion; questions and comments should be welcomed. Keep in mind that family worship time is not a substitute for church attendance but should complement the corporate worship experience at church. Many families use family worship to reinforce what was preached or taught that week at church.

Children will not always appreciate regular church attendance; however, parents must be in spiritual agreement and teach that church attendance is one of the ways that you show obedience and love for God and His people.

In addition to these three spiritual disciplines, spiritual leadership means both parents will make church attendance a priority—for themselves and for their family. Being part of a local group of believers characterized the earliest disciples of Christ (Acts 2:42–47). Children will not always appreciate regular church attendance; however, parents must be in spiritual agreement and teach that church attendance is one of the ways that you show obedience and love for God and His people. **Ignite Parenting** recommends establishing a pattern of regular church attendance and involvement in church ministry.

Children learn patterns of behavior from their parents. What you do as a parent is what your children will do in the future. A common observation is that what a parent does in moderation, a child will do in excess. As a parent, you get to help establish your children's dependence upon God through church involvement when they are young.

Dad and mom, you should lead the family in volunteering and ministry involvement. There are a wide range of opportunities for all ages to serve in the local church. Find your area of gifting and help your children discover their gifts as well. When all members of the family are actively engaged in the ministries of the local church, it benefits both the church and the family.

Too often, parents think of opportunities for Christian service only in the context of the church, but opportunities also abound in the wider community. When you serve, you send a powerful message to your children of what being a Christian really is.

REFLECTION

- Why do you think it is important for your children to be taught spiritual disciples when they are young?
- On a scale of 1–4, with 1 being very important and 4 not very important, rate how important it is for you to lead each of the three spiritual disciplines (reading the word, spending time in prayer, and engaging in regular worship) by example in front of your children? Why?

Purposeful Parenting Moments

Ignite Parenting recognizes that not all relationships are created equal. These action steps are merely suggestions, and we encourage you to adjust your next step to fit the unique relationship you have with each of your children.

Action Step

- [ ] Read from Proverbs every day as a family for one month. Use the date to read the corresponding Proverb—e.g. read chapter one on the first day of the month, chapter two on the second day of the month, and so on. Ask your children what stood out to them, and encourage participation with high fives or small prizes, such as stickers or stamps. Celebrate as a family when you finish the book of Proverbs.
- [ ] As a family sign up to serve together in your local church or at a nonprofit in your city. If there is nothing suitable for your entire family, consider baking cookies for a nursing home or planting flowers for a neighbor.
- [ ] Begin to incorporate worship music in your home. Spend at least one night a week worshipping the Lord together through song.

LESSON 3

A Purposeful Parent Loves *Creatively*

Overview

Amy Nasamran said, "Love is the primary need and the foundation on which all other things can build off of. Everything depends on this foundation between a parent and a child."[2] Children require reassurance of love several times a day. If their need for love is not met, a child can suffer emotional, relational, and spiritual harm. Although it may sound simple, communicating love to a child is not always easy. In this lesson, you will learn how to communicate love to your children in ways they truly understand.

Getting Started

One of the most effective parenting strategies you can have is to creatively communicate love to your family. If you are married, this communication of love should begin with your spouse. Children are sensitive to relationships within the family unit and can sense if the love between their parents is genuine or conditional. In order to feel safe and secure, children need to see that you are totally committed to your spouse and that they are your first priority. If you are a single parent, having healthy boundaries in relationships that prioritize the physical safety and emotional security of your child should take priority.

Children must also feel that they are important and valued members of their family. When children feel that they have a valuable position in the home and that the role they play in the family is important, they feel loved.

The opposite of love is selfishness. At its core, selfishness is the idea that, "I have to be right, and my needs have to be met before anyone else's." When we understand how to conquer selfishness, we will begin to see love bloom in all of our relationships, especially with those closest to us.

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2 Amy Nasamran, "Basic Needs of a Child: The 2 Most Important Things Every Child Needs," *Atlas Psychology*, https://www.atlaspsychologycollective.com/blog/basic-needs-of-a-child (accessed December 2, 2025).

When we understand how to conquer selfishness, we will begin to see love bloom in all of our relationships, especially with those closest to us.

"I love you" can be communicated in several different ways; it can be communicated both verbally and non-verbally. A very effective non-verbal way is to put it in writing. Taking time to write out loving thoughts for your child can make a big impact. Saying "I love you" can be communicated in other creative ways as well. Some families have developed code words or phrases that everyone knows to mean, "I love you." Others have come up with hand signals or some creative form of communication that sends this important message. These do not take the place of the verbal expression but are simple ways to add depth and significance to your communication of love.

A great resource that discusses the ways in which we love and want to be loved is *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman. This book is filled with practical suggestions on how to communicate love to your spouse, your children, and those closest to you.

REFLECTION

- How do your children know that you love your spouse? How do your children know that you love them other than hearing you say it?
- Are there areas in your life where selfishness is getting in the way of being able to love your family in the way that God intended?



Digging Deeper

Lack of love can lead to low self-esteem and feelings of isolation in children. Misbehavior is common among children who do not feel loved and, when children feel unloved, they may turn to other people or things to satisfy their need to be loved. This search for love often leads them to very unhealthy situations and relationships. A 2023 study published in Health Psychology Research reported that having low self-esteem can lead to unhealthy attachments and an addiction to searching for love from another person.[3]

Parents cannot assume that their children *know* they love them. Even if you are a good provider and meet all of their physical needs, your children still need to hear three powerful little words: "I love you." The benefits of saying this simple phrase to your children each day are huge.

The first benefit of speaking love to your child is that it helps them have a healthy view of themselves.

The first benefit of speaking love to your child is that it helps them have a healthy view of themselves. When a child hears "I love you" often, they come to know that they are loved, not because of what they do, but because of who they are (they are your child and a child of the King). Second, expressing love to your child will help them have a greater sense of security. Children who are told they are loved are less likely to develop unhealthy fears and phobias because their home and their family are safe places. The third benefit that occurs when you speak love to your children is that they develop understanding of their emotions. By saying "I love you" with feeling and sincerity, your children will learn about one of the most important emotions in life and their future relationships will be patterned on spoken expressions of love.

Children also need to know that God loves them more than they will ever know and that His love is perfect and differs greatly from the world's definition of love. God's very nature is love (1 John 4:7), and He wants all of His children to feel His love. Helping children understand that they have a Heavenly Father who cares for them, wants the best for them, and sent His son to die on the cross for them (John 3:16), is equally as important as helping them feel loved by their earthly parents or caregivers.

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3 Marilena Giovanna Maglia et al., "Love Addiction—Current Diagnostic and Therapeutic Paradigms in Clinical Psychology," *Health Psychology Research* 11, no. 11 (2023): 2–12, https://doi.org/10.52965/001c.70218.

REFLECTION

Which of the three benefits of a child feeling loved would you most like to develop in your children?

On a scale of 1–4 (1 = not well, 4 = very well), rate how well you know the following about each of your children:

- ☐ _____ when your child has a difficult day
- ☐ _____ when your child is upset
- ☐ _____ what encourages your child the most
- ☐ _____ when you hurt your child's feelings
- ☐ _____ strengths and weaknesses of your child
- ☐ _____ what motivates your child
- ☐ _____ what embarrasses your child
- ☐ _____ what disappoints your child

Purposeful Parenting Moments

Ignite Parenting recognizes that not all relationships are created equal. These action steps are merely suggestions, and we encourage you to adjust your next step to fit the unique relationship you have with each of your children.

Action Step

- ☐ Write a note to each of your children often, expressing your love for them and what you desire most for their life.
- ☐ Commit to read *The Five Love Languages of Children* by Gary Smalley sometime this year and work through the study guide.
- ☐ With each of your children, work through the children's love language quiz at and mystery game.
- ☐ Record in a journal what you've learned about your children. (There are also many other online quizzes available to take with your child).

LESSON 4

A Purposeful Parent Models *Integrity*

Overview

Integrity, or the state of being wholly honest and of strong moral principle, is an essential quality for parents and caregivers to possess. As a parent, your inward convictions are less likely to waiver because the values and principles that are part of who you are (your integrity) will uphold those convictions. However, integrity is something that does not come naturally to people because of our fallen humanity. Integrity must be developed and maintained in order to remain a pillar in your life. In this lesson, you will begin to learn what it means to live a life of integrity.

Getting Started

Diverting from one's biblically founded spiritual convictions (acting without integrity) is often seen as hypocrisy, especially in the eyes of children. As a parent or guardian, you must establish your convictions on the truth of God's word and then begin working, with the help of the Holy Spirit, towards developing the integrity to stick with them. A deep sense of values based on biblical truth will help parents to never lose sight of their convictions. These convictions are what Paul refers to in Romans 14:5 when he states that believers should stand firm in their convictions, even if they disagree with other believers on these convictions, so long as they are not in direct contrast to the Bible.

While society will often follow public opinion, Scripture teaches that truth and righteousness are not determined by majority views but by God's word.

Public opinion shapes many aspects of society. While society will often follow public opinion, Scripture teaches that truth and righteousness are not determined by majority views but by God's word. Believers are called to live by God's truth rather than conforming to society.

Opinions are subject to our humanity, and we may find that they are wrong the more we study Scripture and grow in our faith. An opinion is often changed by gaining new information, shifting personal preferences, and other outside influences such as peers and social media.

However, when we establish our convictions on biblical truth, they will not change (Matthew 24:35). A conviction is solid and should be based on the absolute truth of Scripture. It is from the bedrock of faith in the truth of God's word that our integrity should be established. Thus, parents and caregivers should immerse themselves in the word of God, carefully discerning its commands in order to build a solid foundation for their convictions (2 Timothy 2:15).

The commitment to your convictions will make or break you. If you forget your commitment to the convictions on which you have built your faith, family, and life, you will soon find yourself off course and headed for disaster. Your life will not be one of integrity and you will risk damaging the credibility you have with your children. You must live with integrity in your convictions and not simply your opinions.

Determine to be a person who lives their life with integrity because it directly affects the blessings or burdens you pass along to your children.

REFLECTION

- Think of someone in your life whom you respect for their integrity. How do you know they are a person of integrity?
- What are ways you can model integrity for your children?

Digging Deeper

Becoming a parent of integrity begins with self-examination, knowing who you are and what you value. Most parents have some values but realize that there are others they need to develop in their life. Focusing on values—both those you have and those you want to have—will help you live with integrity. Such values may be those described in 2 Peter 1:3–10, where Peter calls believers to a life of faith, virtue, knowledge, kindness, and love, or those listed in Galatians 5:22–23 by Paul such as joy, patience, and self-control.

Becoming a person of integrity takes time and isn't something that happens overnight—it is a process. Parents who have integrity have a clearly defined set of **internal** values that can be seen **externally** through their words and actions. For example, a parent who values honesty will not engage in lying.

However, there will be times when you will do something that is not consistent with your values. When this happens, it is important to be transparent with your children about the journey towards integrity that you are on. When you make a mistake, acknowledge it and talk

through the mistake at an age-appropriate level with your children. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you not make that mistake again.

Developing integrity in your life may be the most important thing you can do to lead your family spiritually. Acting with integrity in every area of your life sends a powerful message to your family and is one of the biggest things you can do to earn their respect and admiration. Consider the following points and use them as a quick self-evaluation tool as you seek to model greater integrity for your children:

Parents with integrity . . .

- Are the same in public as they are at home.
- Do the right thing when no one else is looking.
- Speak truth in love.
- Keep their word.
- Are trustworthy.
- Show respect to others.



REFLECTION

- What are your top three morals/values? On a scale of 1 to 4 (1 = very well, 4 = not well), how well do you live out these morals/values? If the scores are not as high as you'd like, what can you do to improve?
- If your children grow up to be just like you, will you be proud? Why or why not?

Purposeful Parenting Moments

Ignite Parenting recognizes that not all relationships are created equal. These action steps are merely suggestions, and we encourage you to adjust your next step to fit the unique relationship you have with each of your children.

Action Step

- [ ] Sit down with your family and explain what living with integrity means. Share with them your decision to live a life of integrity.
- [ ] Write out two to four values you will commit to living out with integrity. (Example: I commit to being honest, compassionate, and slow-to-anger in my life.)
- [ ] Consider creating/writing a "Our Family Values" chart. Allow each family member to contribute one or two values. (For example: Our family values kindness. We will try to treat one another with kindness and speak life-giving (kind/nice) words.)
- [ ] Find a partner that can help hold you accountable to living out the values you've set.

LESSON 5

A Purposeful Parent Models *Generosity*

Overview

One of the most important things a parent can teach their children is to look beyond themselves and consider the feelings, interests, and well-being of others. Generosity, in many forms, is a posture of the heart and an attitude of the spirit that sees others the way God sees them; it puts the needs of others before the needs of self. In this lesson, you will unpack the different forms of generosity and learn how to effectively model this value in a way that will be contagious for your children.

Getting Started

The Bible gives great advice on how to see and treat others. How you relate to and interact with others is something with which God is very concerned. A crucial biblical passage for how believers are to treat others is the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. In fact, six of the commandments address relationships with people. Another well-known passage from the New Testament is Matthew 22:37–40, in which Jesus is asked to identify the greatest commandment. He replies that the first is to "Love your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," and the second is to, "Love your neighbor as yourself." He echoes this command in Matthew 7:12, the famous verse known as the Golden Rule: "Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them." There are many more Scriptures concerning relationships with others. They can all be summed up with three words: "Love one another" (John 13:34).

Someone who loves others gives of themselves, their time, and their resources to meet unmet needs. Generosity is a much broader term than financial sacrifice. For believers, generosity means serving others, giving of our time, our talents and our abilities to help whenever needed, and supporting others' needs through the giving of our resources. While parents can certainly teach their children about the importance of generosity, true understanding of generosity comes by seeing it in action, giving parents the responsibility of modeling this value to the next generation.

REFLECTION

- Explain how your parents helped you to look beyond yourself and consider others.
- What can you glean from the Scriptures in lesson five about how we should approach relationships?

Digging Deeper

Parents have a responsibility to teach their children to look beyond themselves and consider the feelings, interests, and well-being of others. Much of life's interaction with others is found outside of the family circle, so the importance of having healthy social skills cannot be overemphasized. Parents encounter friends, coworkers, neighbors, and strangers daily, which means they have lots of opportunities to teach and model healthy relationships and generosity with others, which will have a great impact on the social and relational development of their children.

You are watched by your children more than you realize. One of the most valuable lessons you can give a child is how to get along with and serve others well.

You are watched by your children more than you realize. One of the most valuable lessons you can give a child is how to get along with and serve others well. Not only does your home need to be a place of peace and generosity, you must also strive to live peacefully and give generously with those outside it (Micah 6:8). When parents model healthy interactions, acts of service, and acts of generosity, their children grow up with these behaviors being a normal part of their everyday lives rather than rare occurrences.



There will be times when someone hurts you or acts in selfish ways towards you. When this happens, you have an opportunity to model biblical generosity and forgiveness. Even when others do not deserve your help and are unthankful for your generosity, continue to serve anyway. Generosity may be thankless at times but the impact it has on your children is worth the cost.

REFLECTION

- Ask yourself: How can I show generosity to my children, or what are some ways I can model generosity by being generous to others?
- Describe a time when you acted in a selfish way. Did you make that situation right with the other person? If so, be sure to walk your children through why this action was wrong and how you will respond differently in the future.

Purposeful Parenting Moments

Ignite Parenting recognizes that not all relationships are created equal. These action steps are merely suggestions, and we encourage you to adjust your next step to fit the unique relationship you have with each of your children.

Action Step

- [ ] Have your children write out a Scripture verse pertaining to generosity (Psalm 37:21, 37:26, 112:5; Proverbs 14:21; 2 Corinthians 9:7, 9:11).
- [ ] Find a way to practice generosity as a family in your community—e.g. make cards for residents of a nursing home, pay for a stranger's meal in the drive-through, or participate in some other act of generosity.
- [ ] Practice serving each other and being generous in the home this month. Complete a chore for your child to help them when they're tired, spend time with them during a particularly busy week, or surprise them at school with their favorite treat.

LESSON 6

A Purposeful Parent Models *Humility*

Overview

One of the simplest yet often overlooked ways parents can pass down spiritual wisdom and biblical values to their children is to model humility (Proverbs 11:12). When you walk in humility before your family, you are allowing your children to bear witness to the blessings the Lord bestows on those who recognize their desperate need for a Savior. In this lesson, you will learn how you can effectively model humility in your home and teach your children to recognize their incompleteness without God.

Getting Started

Godly leadership in a family must be servant leadership.

It has long been recognized that organizations tend to mirror the example of their leader(s). In families, this same mirroring principle occurs. The culture of a family is a product of how you lead as a parent, but godly leadership differs from the worldly definition of leadership. Godly leadership in a family must be servant leadership. The key characteristic of a servant leader is humility, an important principle for purposeful parents to understand.

In families, servant leadership is the prioritization of others over ones own wants and desires. When servant leadership is working effectively in a home, an atmosphere of collaboration and trust is established.

When looking for biblical examples of humility, there is no better example than Christ himself. Jesus' humility is the perfect pattern for parents to follow. In Mark's gospel, you can find these words: "But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave [servant] of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:43–45). Jesus' humble life of servanthood reflects the value God places on humility.

The Old Testament speaks to God's view on humility often and places a high priority on it in every area of our lives:

- "Toward the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor" (Proverbs 3:34).
- "The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life" (Proverbs 22:4).
- "He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way" (Psalm 25:9).

REFLECTION

- Describe the ways your parents taught you about serving others in your home as a child. Which of those ways do you want to pass down to your children, and which of those ways do you want to change?
- Research specific ways Jesus served others while on earth. Among those examples, do you notice any similarities in the way He served? (Examples: Matthew 21:14, Mark 10:13–16; John 3:16, 13:3–5; Romans 5:8)

Digging Deeper

The servant leadership style has been around for a long time. In 1970, Robert K. Greenleaf brought this style to the modern business world saying, "The servant leader is servant first."[4]

Parents who desire to be servant leaders should have the primary focus of how best to serve their family in a way that points them to Jesus. When you lead your family using the servant-leader model, it instills important values in your children. These values, such as how to treat others, impact your child's entire life.

True humility is an attitude of the heart. It is having the desire to serve rather than be served. If you embrace an authoritarian, dictator-like style of leadership and want to be the boss, that does not reflect the servant heart of Christ to your family. In fact, you may even create deep resentments and anger in your children, triggering them to rebel. Children raised in this atmosphere often question their parent's love for them or develop lifelong insecurities.

4 Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey Into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1977), 338.

Rick Warren defined humility this way in his book *The Purpose Driven Life*: *What on Earth Am I Here for?* "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less."[5] What does humility look like for a Spirit-empowered parent? Consider the following:

Humility in a parent requires:

- Total dependence on God.
- Knowing they are not perfect and admitting their mistakes.
- Offering grace and patience to others.
- Asking for forgiveness often.
- Remaining transparent and open.
- Servant leadership.

REFLECTION

Look at the list above of what humility looks like. For each point, rate yourself on a scale of 1–4 with 1 being the best and 4 not very good. Select one area to pray about and ask the Holy Spirit to help you improve in. Consider praying through all of the areas over the next year, spending two to three months praying over each.



5 Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here for?* (Michigan: Zondervan, 2012), 134.

Purposeful Parenting Moments

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Action Step

- [ ] Commit one of the following verses to memory:
    - "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." (Matthew 23:12)
    - "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you." (1 Peter 5:6)
- [ ] Consider looking for other verses in the Bible that talk about humility or use the word *humble*.
- [ ] What is one "thankless job" you can do for your children that would allow you to bless them? (Example: If your child hates making their bed, consider doing that job for them one or two mornings a week as a blessing, modeling servanthood in the home.)
    - Consider reading C. Gene Wilkes' book *Jesus on Leadership: Timeless Wisdom on Servant Leadership*. As you go, write down three to five things you glean from each chapter.
    - Other great resources and alternative options are AW Tozer's *Lead Like Christ* and Tara-Leigh Cobble's *Knowing Jesus as Servant*.

LESSON 7

A Purposeful Parent Models *Self-Control*

Overview

A critical part of a child's maturation into adulthood is their ability to develop and exercise self-control, yet self-control is something that is more easily "caught" than "taught." This means that children will watch and imitate (catch) how you respond to situations. They will also see the way you model self-control instead of learning self-control through your lectures (teaching), no matter how well-intended. Throughout this lesson, you will explore the topic of self-control and gain understanding on the importance of teaching self-control to your children through modeling.

Getting Started

The Bible's perspective on self-control is clear. Consider Proverbs 29:11: "A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back." The New Testament shows the importance of self-control and lists it as one of the fruits of the Spirit. Parents have a clear responsibility to help their children develop self-control.

The primary purpose of discipline should always be to change and positively shape behavior, not just to punish or control unwanted behavior.

The earlier a child learns self-control, the more likely the child will grow up to be a productive and mature adult. One of the dangers parents must avoid is the natural tendency to use discipline just for the sake of controlling behavior. The primary purpose of discipline should always be to change and positively shape behavior, not just to punish or control unwanted behavior. Parents who use threats, intimidation, and the fear of punishment to try to control behavior will only address the behavior at surface level. But the development of self-control is internal, and unless you focus on shaping their internal values, you will have minimal success at nurturing the development of self-control in your child. Self-control is largely a learned behavior, and it is learned over a lifetime. No one ever fully masters self-control but, instead, guiding our children on the journey towards the development of self-control is what we should aim for as parents.

REFLECTION

- Are there any areas of your life where you could improve your self-control?
- Describe how your parents displayed self-control during your childhood. Do you think this effected the development of self-control in your life?

Digging Deeper

The ability to regulate one's behavior varies from child to child. Depending on the child's age, emotional and mental development, and other physical or psychological factors, their ability to control their impulses is naturally greater or less. For a parent with children who have attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or other developmental impairments, teaching self-control can seem overwhelming. With God's help—community assistance programs, school support, and/or sometimes medication—it is possible to make it through trying years and help your child learn self-control.

Parents play a major role in helping their children learn self-control. It begins with the parents staying in control of themselves. When you lose control, it sends the message that it is okay to be out of control. As a parent, you can help create an atmosphere where self-control is rewarded. Take note of instances where your preschool child must wait for something (even if only for a minute or two) and praise them. Praise the self-control of older children when they do homework or chores without complaining, or when they keep their words respectful even when upset. Children have a desire to please and often respond well to the smallest gestures of love and approval that parents give. You can also play games and do activities that require self-control. Such activities include freeze tag, building block towers, Simon Says, or any game where children must wait their turn and control impulses. For children of all ages, games and activities can be great teaching tools.

REFLECTION

On a scale of 1–4 (with 1 being very well and 4 being not so well), rate how well you display self-control in front of your children. Over the next two weeks, evaluate the situations in which you feel you lack self-control (such as at dinner, in the morning before school, etc.) and practice intentional self-control during those times. For example, commit to not yelling during the stressful moments of the day, or commit to remaining calm and lighthearted while you make dinner. Consider asking your children to help with age appropriate tasks, such as setting the table, to create family memories.

Purposeful Parenting Moments

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Action Step

- [ ] Choose one of the following games to play with your child. (Each game helps kids learn and practice self-control.)
  - Simon Says
  - Freeze Dance
  - Follow the Leader
  - Mother May I
  - Red Light Green Light
- [ ] Look up other games or activities that teach self-control and align with each of your children's different ages/abilities.
- [ ] Once a month, play a game or do an activity with your children that teaches self-control. Make sure you have a conversation with your children afterward about how well they did or did not display self-control, keeping it lighthearted and fun.
- [ ] Have a discussion about a time when you did not display self-control with you children. Make sure you tell the lessons you learned and the consequences you experienced. Then, talk about any examples of people in the Bible that did or did not exemplify self-control.



LESSON 8

A Purposeful Parent *Loves Like God*

Overview

Children are uniquely designed individuals, each created with special gifts, talents, and abilities. Because of their individual needs and personalities, parents must learn to communicate love to each of their children in a way that meets their unique style of understanding. As a parent, the importance of expressing love to your children is universal, but learning to express love to each child in a different way takes purposeful intention. In this lesson, you will begin the journey of learning to love your children in ways that touch their individual hearts, just as God loves each of us in ways specifically tailored to who He created us to be.

Getting Started

If you are a follower of Christ, you are a child of God, no matter your age, because you have a Heavenly Father who loves you. Because of this, you can look to your relationship with God the Father for direction and guidance in your relationship with your children. Most parents see the importance of expressing their love, but parents may fail to see the things they can do to express that love in different ways. Thankfully, we have a perfect example in our Heavenly Father and can look to Scripture for guidance.

First, God knows His children. Psalm 139:1–3 says, "O LORD, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways." You can learn two things from these verses: God desires to know all about His children and is in active pursuit to know us, all because He loves them.

Second, God provides for His children. Philippians 4:19 says, "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." God desires to make sure His children have the necessary provision for life and provides for each of His children according to their individual needs.

Third, God is accessible to His children. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." God the Father invites His children to come to Him. You can approach Him with confidence knowing that He cares for you and His ear is always open to your prayer.

Fourth, God has His children's best interests at heart. Jeremiah 29:11 states, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

Fifth, God's love for His children never changes. James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." The gift of God's love is unchanging and freely given, not something that is bought or earned.

REFLECTION

- Describe how love was expressed in your home as a child.
- Read through the five ways God loves His children above. Which of those ways do you best emulate in your home? Which of those ways do you need to work on better emulating in your home?

Digging Deeper

You may think, "I am not like God and cannot know my child(ren) like He knows me." However, you can make an effort to take a strong interest in all aspects of your child's life. Get to know your child's likes and dislikes. In other words, study each child. When you do, it assures your child that they are valued and loved for who they are. Children are not all the same and you should strive to know the differences between each of your children.

Providing for your children's physical needs is essential. However, being a provider is not just putting food on the table and a roof overhead. Too often we assume providing for our children means making money to pay the bills. While that is part of what you need to do to provide for your child, it is a critical that you are also a provider of the emotional and spiritual needs of your children. Be present for your child. Provide a shoulder for them to cry. Provide a smile to brighten their day. Provide an encouraging text message to help them on a tough morning. Determine what emotional, spiritual, and relational needs they have and prioritize those needs as you plan out each week. The goal should be that each of your children feel as if they can come to you with their questions, their fears, their hopes, and their dreams and, when they do, they are confident that they will have your unconditional love and guidance.

Ultimately, your love as a parent should follow the example of Christ's love, which is unchanging, cannot be bought or earned, and is given freely. There is great security in the parent-child relationship when the child understands that they are loved unconditionally, because of who they are and not because of what they might do. Do not misunderstand; this does not mean that if your child does wrong, that you should not discipline them in love. It is possible to strongly disapprove of some behavior and still love your child. In fact, many times purposeful parents will find themselves "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). However, if a foundation of love has been laid, the truth in love will be received well and not seen as a personal attack.

REFLECTION

- How approachable were your parents in your childhood? How did their level of approachability make you feel as a child?
- How can you become more intentional in loving each of your children as they need to be loved?

Purposeful Parenting Moments

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Action Step

- [ ] Sit down with each of your children and ask them what their favorite drink, candy, or activity is. Then, take the opportunity to enjoy it with them later in the week.
- [ ] For the next week, sit down with each of your children and ask them what went well and what didn't go well in their day when they get home from school or before they go to bed.
- [ ] Take each of your children to their favorite restaurant or make their favorite meal with them at home, and ask questions to learn more about them as an individual, uniquely designed by Christ.

09

LESSON 9

A Purposeful Parent *Nurtures Their Children*

Overview

Children are a blessing and a heritage from the Lord (Psalm 127:3). Yet we, as their parents, are responsible for nurturing them in several different ways. The three main areas of a child's development are emotional, social, and intellectual. Nurturing a child in these three areas is something that cannot be done passively, it takes intentionality. In this lesson, we will bring awareness to these areas of a child that need parental nurturing and give insight as to how you have an active role in developing each of these areas in your children.

Getting Started

Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 2:8, "So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us." In this same way, parents give of themselves to train their children in all areas of life. If you want to be purposeful in your parenting, you must be willing to do more than watch; you must be involved in your children's lives. This may require you to roll up your sleeves, get in the weeds, and invest time and energy into your children. This is an investment that is never wasted.

If you want to be purposeful in your parenting, you must be willing to do more than watch; you must be involved in your children's lives.

To nurture a child, we must teach them and train them. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it." This is a powerful principle in raising children. Although this is a proverbial statement, not a promise, the truth of the principle remains steadfast: that the spiritual instruction we give our children will be something that will build a strong foundation of faith in their lives. This foundation will last and will always be available to provide stable ground for them when they need it most.

REFLECTION

- What do you think the difference is between the three areas (social, emotional, and intellectual) of a child's development?
- Consider the following: In what specific ways am I investing myself in my children's lives? How can I be more intentional?

Digging Deeper

One of the areas that a parent should be sure they help their children develop is in emotional health and well-being. Emotional health includes the thoughts, feelings, and accompanying behaviors of a person.

One of the most effective emotional health-building tools a parent can use is listening to your child. Listening is not just hearing but also watching. Their behavior may speak volumes about what they are feeling. While it is natural for children to become angry and get upset from time to time, when they are visibly upset and distressed, children need to let their feelings be known. As adults, when we get upset, the thing we usually need the most is for someone to listen to us vent. Your children are the same way. Sometimes the best gift you can give them is to listen. As they calm down, take the opportunity to talk about the emotions they are feeling (or were feeling) and how best to deal with them in a way that honors God. Remember, Jesus got angry; anger is not wrong. The behavior that comes as a result of anger is where things can become an issue.

Remember, Jesus got angry; anger is not wrong. The behavior that comes as a result of anger is where things can become an issue.

When children become upset, purposeful parents should view this as an opportunity to help their child become more aware of their feelings and practice problem-solving. Problem-solving is simply helping your child learn ways to deal with their feelings without hurting others or acting in a way that dishonors the Lord. This opportunity is all about your child learning to rely on the Holy Spirit for self-control and this takes lots of practice and time.

A second area parents need to help develop in the life of their children is social health. This includes helping children develop the social skills of talking to others, listening, making compromises, using good manners, and having empathy for others. Social skills will impact every area of your child's life. This is why you must be aware of how your child is interacting with others.

Learning social skills starts in the home and at a young age. Parents must always remember that their children are watching them and will model what they say, what they do, and how they respond to situations and to other people. What they learn about social skills will come, not from what you tell them, but from what they see you do. Some of the ways you can help a child develop social skills are:

- Modeling respect for others
- Practicing conflict resolution
- Teaching them respect for rules and authority figures
- Showing empathy for others
- Helping them make and keep healthy friendships

As parents, we should always be looking for opportunities where our children can use the skills they are learning in the everyday moments of life. Having play dates with friends, joining school clubs and groups, and participating in sports are all ways for children to become socially involved. Closely observe how your child is interacting with others and, if problems arise, address them at an appropriate time together. Remember, children don't always "get it" the first time. It is normal for your child to need things explained to them multiple times.

The third area we need to nurture in our children is intellectual growth. Learning begins at birth; from the time they come into the world, children seem to want to learn everything. Sadly, this desire often takes a sharp decline during puberty.[6] However, a love for learning can be rekindled at any age. (Parents/Caregivers, it is never too late to learn something new! Modeling a commitment to learning, such as participating in a new hobby, practicing a new language, or reading a new genre of book, can be powerful examples of lifelong learning for children).

Encouraging a child's intellectual growth and motivating them to want to learn can be done at any age. However, what motivates one child doesn't necessarily motivate another. All children are different and discovering their passions and interests can be challenging. You must also be careful not to project your own interests onto your children. While some children will naturally pick up the interests of their parents, when parents push their own interests on their child instead of inviting them to be part of those interests if they so choose, children may feel pressure to meet expectations that they have no desire or intrinsic motivation to

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6 Andrew J. Martin et al., "The Role of Motivation and Puberty Hormones in Adolescents' Academic Engagement and Disengagement," *Learning and Individual Differences* 100 (2022): 1–13, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2022.102213 (accessed October 21, 2025).

meet. Instead, when a child's interest is found, encourage and support that interest, even if it is not interesting to you personally. Here are some ways a parent might help encourage the intellectual development of their child:

- Problem-solving and puzzles
- Memory games
- Singing
- Imaginary play
- Reading
- Becoming involved in schoolwork
- Taking educational field trips
- Exploring new places
- Meeting interesting people
- Taking a class to learn a new skill together
- Speaking highly of the benefits of learning



REFLECTION

- Write down each of your children's unique strengths and weaknesses. What can you glean about your child's interests?
- What can you do to make sure you are helping your child develop in each of the three areas discussed in this chapter?

Purposeful Parenting Moments

Ignite Parenting recognizes that not all relationships are created equal. These action steps are merely suggestions, and we encourage you to adjust your next step to fit the unique relationship you have with each of your children.

Action Step

- [ ] Write down a 2-step plan to help you nurture your children's emotional health, social skills, and intellectual growth.
- [ ] Set goals together with your child for their growth in each of these three areas: emotional, social, and intellectual. List specific objectives that they will meet to show their maturation and development in each area.
- [ ] Take an educational field trip with each of your children and talk about the value of learning new things. Consider the following ideas:
    - Go to the zoo and read one fun fact about each animal from the information plaque in front of the cages.
    - Visit a historical site or museum.
    - Check out books about interesting topics at your local library.
    - Go to a national park and ask your tour guide to share three fun facts.

LESSON 10

A Purposeful Parent is *Present*

Overview

Part of purposeful parenting is being present, emotionally and physically, for your child. Being present means learning how to say no to certain things, wants, or personal desires in order to spend time getting into the world of your child. Sometimes, this may require you to schedule time for you and your child, much like you would schedule an appointment. Blocking out this time on your calendar preserves it and helps both you and your child to see it as a priority. In this lesson, parents discover why purposeful parents don't **find** time but, instead, **make** time to spend with their kids.

Getting Started

Time with your children is something to treasure. The demands and distractions of the world are great and threaten to steal away precious time with your kids. Life is short, and in Scripture we see the time one spends on earth described as a "mist" (James 4:14). Yet during that time, parents are commanded to instruct, train up, and lead their children in the ways of the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:7; Ephesians 6:4). This takes time and moments of purposeful parenting in which your presentness takes priority. In order to prioritize "presentness," you must be willing to sacrifice short-term pleasures for long-term riches.

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The amount of time a parent is able to spend with a child varies considerably. A growing number of children are living in single-parent households, or in a situation where custody is shared. In these situations, a custodial parent will usually have much more time available than a noncustodial parent. So, the question that often comes up is whether quantity or quality of time spent with your kids is more important. The truth is, your children need both quality and quantity time with their loving, involved, and present parent.

REFLECTION

- How can you become more intentional in spending time with your child?
- Describe how your dad and mom were present in your life growing up. How did this make you feel?

Digging Deeper

As a busy parent, it may be hard to find time for your child. After all, there are only 24 hours in a day. But any amount of time a parent spends with their child can be productive and special.

Spending intentional time with your child has many benefits:

- Strengthens your relationship
- Gives opportunity for better communication
- Shows your child they have value and builds their self-esteem
- Helps reduce behavior problems
- Gives opportunity for your child to learn from your example
- Shows love for the child

Common sense tells us that when a parent has limited time with their child, that time should be treasured and its quality should be prioritized. A key part of making quality time is to schedule it. While it is true that some great quality times may just happen, for most parents, good quality time is planned and scheduled.

When parents have several children, it's possible for one child to monopolize the time due to personality or age. Furthermore, some children by nature seem prone to getting left out, particularly if they tend to be nonassertive. When this happens, you may not realize it is happening. This is one reason you need to know your children well; so, you can meet the individual needs of each. One way to address this is to have one-on-one time with each child. This special time alone can be very meaningful to your child, and it also sends them a very important message: *You are important, and I value you*. As you and your child get to know each other better, your relationship strengthens. These times also give you a chance to address the unique needs that particular child may have.

REFLECTION

- What are some of the different ways you can spend time with your child?
- Take some time and write in your journal some of the special characteristics of each of your children (great attitude, enthusiastic, gets along well with others, etc.). Then, take each of your children out for a meal separately and tell them how much you appreciate the special gifts God has given them. Journal your thoughts and emotions from the meeting.

Purposeful Parenting Moments

Ignite Parenting recognizes that not all relationships are created equal. These action steps are merely suggestions, and we encourage you to adjust your next step to fit the unique relationship you have with each of your children.

Action Step

- [ ] Write down the special abilities and attributes of each of your children.
- [ ] Schedule a special activity with just you and each one of your children at their favorite restaurant, park, or play place. Ask them questions about how they feel about God, their friends, their family, their future, and their favorite activities. (Consider using Ignite Parenting's Conversation Cards for this.)
- [ ] Plan a special overnight getaway with each of your children this year (or a special sleepover in your room or the living room). Ask them questions to get to know them on a deeper level. (What makes you laugh out loud? If this year was a meal/song/color, what would it be and why? What gave you a sense of accomplishment this year? What did you learn this year?) Afterwards, journal what you learned about each of your children and pray a special prayer over them, tailored to their unique needs and desires.

LESSON 11

A Purposeful Parent Sets Boundaries and *Understands Misbehavior*

Overview

One of your greatest tasks as a parent is setting and enforcing rules for your children. Rules are critical for a child's development and help them feel safe, but rules are also one of the biggest sources of conflict within a family. Children of all ages often test boundaries and struggle to live within the rules set by their parents, resulting in misbehavior. In this lesson, you will begin the process of learning how to establish clear and consistent rules within your home and how to respond effectively to a child's behaviors in response to those rules.

Getting Started

Raising children is not easy. In today's culture, the constant flood of child-rearing opinions, social media influences, and new and trending parenting styles can make navigating parenthood confusing and chaotic. However, Christian parents who desire to be empowered by God's Spirit can look to Scripture and their Heavenly Father to help guide them. James 1:5 says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." When you seek the Lord's wisdom, He will help you align your parenting style, your rules, and the boundaries you set with His word, giving you confidence in your decisions.

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Rules are an important and necessary part of life. When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, God knew that He needed to establish clear expectations for them to follow, resulting in the bestowment of the Ten Commandments to Moses. Take a moment to reflect on the rules of your home and, as you do, consider these thoughts. First, you should not allow rules to be dictated by anyone other than you. God gave your kids to *you* to parent, and you alone have the responsibility as their parent to decide what is best for your children. When rules are set, explain to your children *why* the rule is being established and help them to understand the

biblical principle behind the rule. Additionally, as children age, they need more autonomy. This allows them to have a voice and understand why expectations are set and creates "buy-in" from children, something that helps keep rebellion from setting in.

Second, know the difference between opinion and conviction. An opinion can, and should, change based on new information. However, your convictions should be firm and based on biblical absolutes. When it comes to setting boundaries with your children, base them on convictions rather than opinion and rely on Scripture rather than social culture to inform those convictions.

Third, children should understand that the parameters you have put into place are for their safety. Stepping outside the protection of the boundaries you have set can lead to painful consequences. Help your children understand the spiritual, emotional, and physical consequences of failing to adhere to the rules. Show them examples from Scripture where people stepped outside of the rules God established and the consequences they faced as a result. Consider referencing Jonah running from God (Jonah 1), the Israelites making false idols (Exodus 32), and/or the lie of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11).

Fourth, do not be afraid to have rules that other families do not have. Rules are specific to each family and should be decided upon independent of the opinion of others. If you feel prompted to set a certain boundary for your family that is "out of the ordinary"—or that other families in your sphere of influence do not adhere to—set it regardless. Your children may not agree, but if your rules are based in Scripture and established with prayer, they will eventually honor you for holding to your convictions.

REFLECTION

- Describe the rules and expectations you had in your home as a child. How do you think this affects the way you parent today?
- Do you have clearly defined boundaries and rules in your home? Are there any rules that do not align with Scripture? Are there any rules you have felt convicted to establish but have not established yet because you fear the backlash of your children or the opinion of others?

Digging Deeper

What happens when your child breaks the rules? Many times, bad behavior is a symptom of something else going on with the child. This is particularly true with very young children. In these instances, punishing the child usually doesn't help change the behavior. There are many reasons why children misbehave. Some of the more common reasons are:

- Sickness
- Hunger/thirst
- Desire for attention
- Tiredness
- Desire to test the rules
- Not understanding, or forgetting, the rules
- Disbelief that you really mean what you say
- Learning and behavioral impairments (ADD, ADHD, etc.)

If you see a sudden, unusual change in your child's behavior, it often means something or someone has influenced them. For this reason, you need to know the people your children spend time with and the activities they engage in.

Undesirable behavior can also be a result of bad experiences the child has gone through or is currently going through. Communication is extremely important in these situations. You want your child to feel that they can talk to you about anything going on in their life.

Some misbehavior is preventable. A good first step is to always make sure the rules and expectations are clearly understood. Modeling and rewarding good behavior helps to reduce inappropriate behavior. Take an active interest in your child and provide a safe environment for them where they have clearly defined parameters that help them mature into healthy, productive adults.

REFLECTION

- Why is it important to know what is causing children's misbehavior?
- Describe why healthy relationships with your children are important in disciplining them.

Purposeful Parenting Moments

Ignite Parenting recognizes that not all relationships are created equal. These action steps are merely suggestions, and we encourage you to adjust your next step to fit the unique relationship you have with each of your children.

Action Step

- [ ] Write down and evaluate your rules for your children. Write an "O" for opinion and a "C" for biblical conviction beside each rule. For Christian parents and caregivers, it is important to remember that all of your convictions should be anchored in Scripture; this provides clear boundaries and guidelines for establishing rules within the home.
- [ ] Write a biblical explanation for each of your rules. Sit down with your children and explain your rationale for each rule, inviting them to give their thoughts. It takes a delicate balance to both truly hear the comments and suggestions your children may have while also being cautious not to adjust God's word to fit your desires or preferences. It can be helpful to have a conversation with your children that communicates: Though there may be some rules in the Bible that we don't understand or like, obeying God wholeheartedly is not arbitrary. Considering all of this, make any necessary adjustments to the rules as a family and be sure to pray together at the conclusion of the conversation.
- [ ] Ask your children to tell you what they think and feel about the family rules and your discipline methods. Be ready to acknowledge areas of weakness and ask for forgiveness if needed. Be sure to pray together at the conclusion of the conversation.



LESSON 12

A Purposeful Parent Disciplines *with Grace*

Overview

For some parents, discipline means administering punishment for wrongdoing. However, this is more fitting of the word punishment than it is for the word discipline. The word *punishment* means giving a penalty for an offense or wrongdoing. But the word *discipline* means to train and develop a habit of something. For Christian parents, the primary objective should be discipline of children from the biblical perspective of grace. Biblical discipline is not punishment, but is learning to shape a child's behavior and enabling them to live out the full purpose for which God designed them. In this lesson, you will learn what it means to discipline children with grace.

Getting Started

Grace in discipline requires you to separate the behavior from the identity of the child, remembering that their actions are not a direct reflection of their identity.

A parent has a biblical mandate to train (or disciple) their child to do what is right (Deuteronomy 6:4–9). This training includes discipline. And for Christian parents, this discipline should come from a foundation of grace. The classic Christian definition of *grace* is "unmerited favor." In the context of discipline, grace can be best understood as "unconditional love."

Don't misunderstand the meaning of grace when it comes to your child's discipline. Showing grace does not mean you should never administer a punishment to children—kids need to understand that there are consequences to their actions. What showing grace *does* mean is that you approach a child's behavior with understanding and seek to increase positive behaviors rather than simply decrease negative behaviors. Grace in discipline requires you to separate the behavior from the identity of the child, remembering that their actions are not a direct reflection of their identity. Therefore, when you correct your child, speak to their identity and show them how they acted in contradiction to who God has called them to be. An example would be, "Son, you are growing into a man of God. He has great things for you. When you lie, you are not acting in a way that shows others the man God has called you to be."

REFLECTION

- Were you raised with grace-based discipline in your home? How did this effect you as a child and how does it affect you as an adult?
- Why is grace difficult to give when a child misbehaves?

Digging Deeper

Many parents struggle when it comes to disciplining children. Often, they find themselves swinging between being too lenient or too hard with their children. To complicate matters, each child is different and their response to different forms of discipline varies. What works well with one child may have no positive effect on another. Furthermore, a child's poor behavior often triggers an emotional response in parents. They may begin to lose control and take their disappointment and anger out on the child in an inappropriate way.

Discipline isn't easy but bringing discipline into your child's life is one of the most loving things you can do as a parent. Remember, the purpose of discipline is not to punish but to train (Proverbs 22:6). Discipline works best when it incorporates love, grace, and sometimes, age-appropriate punishment (consequences). Punishment by itself may do nothing but pause bad behavior while discipline's objective is to alter the child's inward thoughts and behaviors. For the desired change to last, it must be internalized. Effective discipline creates a desire in the child to adopt the right attitude, which leads to appropriate behavior.

This topic—the benefit of godly, wise discipline for the benefit of believers—is discussed in Hebrews 12:10–11. This verse says, "They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (NIV). The author of this passage acknowledges the temporary discomfort sometimes necessitated by discipline for the purpose of correction, but also quickly reminds readers that the harvest produced by such discipline is worth the temporary pain.

Ignite Parenting suggests a three-part disciplinary process for parents. The first part of the disciplinary process is to define your expectations. You cannot hold your child accountable for things they do not know they are supposed to do or not do. Often, parents do not clearly communicate their expectations to children. The younger and more inexperienced the child, the clearer and more concrete the explanation of desired behavior needs to be. Keep it simple.

Use phrases such as “Place your shoes by the door,” “Don’t throw toys,” and “Speak to your siblings with a quieter voice,” are some examples.

The second part of the disciplinary process is to reinforce desired behavior. Discipline is not just punishment; it is also the rewarding of good attitudes and behavior. Feel free to use creative methods to foster desired outcomes in your child’s behavior. Such methods may include sticker charts, staying up 15 minutes later for displaying good behavior, or using a color system to help your child know if their behavior is on track (green means a good day, yellow means their behavior needs work, and red means they need to do things differently).

The third part of the disciplinary process is to administer appropriate punishment for bad behavior. Children may behave inappropriately even after you have encouraged a desired behavior. Even though you may have warned them of the consequences, sometimes they will still misbehave. Some form of corrective action or punishment may be needed in these situations. Before acting at this point, it may be helpful to analyze the misbehavior that has occurred. Answering four questions can help clarify the problem and help to administer the best form of discipline. These questions include:

- Did the child know that their behavior was wrong?
- Are your expectations consistent with what the child is truly capable of doing?
- Is the misbehavior serious, or are you overreacting due to your own tiredness or lack of patience?
- Was this an accident or something that the child could not control?

Depending on the answers to these questions, you will better know how to proceed in the discipline process. The effectiveness of discipline will largely depend upon the punishment used. Before deciding on which form of discipline to use, consider the age, mental capacity, and uniqueness of the child as well as the seriousness and frequency of the offense.

A parent should ask themselves:

- Does this punishment fit the offense?
- Is it fair to punish the child for this?
- Are my emotions under control?

Another thing to consider is that sometimes the best discipline decision is not to take corrective action but to allow the natural consequences of a child’s decisions to play out. While you should never put your child in danger by inaction, sometimes a lesson is best learned

by reaping the consequences of actions. Furthermore, it is possible to create patterns of misbehavior by intervening and stopping the natural consequences of your child's choices. For example, if you always pick up your child's toys, they will have a more difficult time doing this by themselves. However, if their toys are left on the floor and get stepped on, broken, or lost, the child will learn the importance of putting their toys away when they are done playing.

Finally, when administering corrective action, take care not to shame your child, especially in front of others. Public humiliation can severely harm the psyche of a child. Be careful what you say and how you say it. The goal of discipline should be to redirect and reconnect with your child. Consequences, when administered correctly, should help correct a child's behavior without breaking their spirit.

REFLECTION

- Do you feel the punishments you received as a child were usually fair or unfair? Why?
- How can discipline or the lack of discipline in a child's life affect them as an adult?

Purposeful Parenting Moments

Ignite Parenting recognizes that not all relationships are created equal. These action steps are merely suggestions, and we encourage you to adjust your next step to fit the unique relationship you have with each of your children.

Action Step

- [ ] Think of the time/place/situation in which your children most often misbehave. Write out your behavior expectations for your children during those times. Make sure you discuss these expectations with them and ask for their feedback. Take note of any behavioral differences next time that particular situation comes up and be aware of how explaining expectations influenced your child's behavior.
- [ ] Write out some ways you can reward and reinforce desired behaviors from your child. Consider reward charts, stickers, or another form of positive reinforcement.

LESSON 13

A Purposeful Parent *Challenges Their Children*

Overview

Young children are natural dreamers. When talking to a young child about their future dreams, you will often hear answers like “I want to be an astronaut!” or “I want to build a pirate ship.” However, as children get older, their big dreams are often reduced to easy-to-reach goals that require little work or effort. A purposeful parent should encourage their children’s pursuit of God’s “big dreams” for their life. In this lesson, you will begin discovering how you can help your children continue to dream big, godly dreams all throughout their life.

Getting Started

Pastor Tommy Barnett, founder of the Dream Center in Los Angeles, California, writes the following:

Dreams are not merely the nightly thoughts you experience as the brain sorts out the day’s events. They are the goals and visions that fire your heart and saturate your soul with joy at the very thought of them. They are those continuing visions of what you want your life to be at its highest level of fulfillment—what you want to do, how you want to do it, what kind of person you want to become in the process.

Your destiny and reason for living are wrapped up tightly in your dreams and desires, like the genetic information inside a seed. That dream in your heart contains your spiritual ‘DNA,’ the very blueprint for who you are. Your dream is that idea, that vision for your life that burns inside of you—something you can’t ignore for long. It keeps coming back to your mind because it is part of who you are; it will never leave you alone.

A dream doesn’t drive you; it draws you. It is like a big magnet that pulls you toward itself. I don’t believe that there is a man or woman without a dream, because God designed every member of the human race to have dreams. Without a dream, a person will be frustrated in the present and will miss his or her future.

Your dream did not even originate with you. It resides within you, but God put it there. He is the source of your dream. When people dream without God, they find it hollow and unsatisfying. Every person must come to Jesus for his or her dream to make sense. In fact, without Jesus, you might follow a dream for your life that God never put in your heart.

Not every dream is from God. There is such a thing as godless dreams. But when your dream is God's dream, it's unstoppable.[7]

There are some key biblical points that you should keep in mind as you help your children dream. First, you must remember that your own abilities and dreams come from God. Point your children to God as the source of your dreams and desires. A good verse to study together is James 1:17 which says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." Second, God is working with you to help your children reach their dreams. A good verse to memorize together is Romans 8:28: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." Third, dreams must bring glory to God. Another good verse to memorize together is 1 Corinthians 10:31: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

REFLECTION

- Reread Tommy Barnett's statement on dreams. What stood out to you the most? Why?
- Describe how your parents challenged you to dream big as a child.

7 Tommy Barnett, *Reaching Your Dreams: Seven Steps for Turning Dreams into Reality* (Florida: Charisma House, 2005), 2–3.

Digging Deeper

Dreaming comes naturally to children. Their imaginations are very active. Their minds are not full of all the realities of life, and thus their dreams can be really big. For adults, this unbridled optimism may seem to be just foolishness. However, dreams are very important for children. Their dreams give them hope and something to work towards. There is a strong correlation between children who have big dreams and successful adults. Some of the world's greatest achievements and inventions have come from those who continued to dream big and be passionate about the future well beyond childhood. Even Scripture is full of those who dared to dream big. Joseph was a dreamer, David's big dreams led him to incredible feats of bravery, and Nehemiah's dream led him to successfully rebuild the city walls. Even the dreams of Moses' mother—that her son would escape death—represent dreams held beyond all doubt. Sadly, adults sometimes kill the dreams and passions of children. What could children become if their dreams and passions were nurtured and encouraged?

One of the greatest things a parent can do for their family is be a dreamer. Not the kind who just dreams, but one who dreams and then takes action to make those dreams a reality. Children are watching, and they know when their parents have given up hope and stopped dreaming. A parent who has a passion for life and hope for the future will see those same attributes in their child.



There are many things you can do to coach your children to dream big, including the following:

- Expose your children to big dreamers.

  History is full of dreamers, like Amelia Earhart, Martin Luther King, and Thomas Edison, just to name a few. Don't be limited to historical figures. Let your children meet and have opportunities to be around people with big dreams.

- Do something new with your child.

  Going to a new place or meeting someone new may plant a seed from which a big dream will grow. Perhaps a museum might encourage your children in their current dreams or help inspire new ones. You could also look around for classes and hobbies your children might enjoy.

- Encourage curiosity and creativity.

  Don't ignore questions. Play with toys and games that require creativity. Encourage building things and repairing things. This could take the form of building blocks, puzzles, roleplaying games, arts and crafts, costumes—the possibilities are endless! Play with your child and encourage them to see the big picture by looking to the future.

- Be there for support when a dream seems to fall apart.

  Help them see that sometimes success comes through failures. These times are great teachable moments. Praise your child's work, persistence, and patience, even when the task is difficult, long, or doesn't turn out like they hoped. Focus on the process more than the outcome.

- Help your child set goals that are part of their dream.

  Remember, it is their dream, not yours. Make the goals realistic and let them be achievable in a short period of time. Small successful steps towards their dream will build confidence and give hope that will keep their passion alive.

REFLECTION

- On a scale of 1–4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, rate yourself on how well you encourage your children to dream big. What is one thing you can do for each of your children this week to encourage their dreams?
- Take time to ask your children about their dreams, hopes for the future, or "big life goal" this week.

Purposeful Parenting Moments

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Action Step

- [ ] Have each of your children draw or write their dreams on paper to show you. What did you learn about each of your children?
- [ ] Sit down with each of your children and go over their dreams. Write out an action step you can take together now to encourage and/or help them fulfill their dreams.
- [ ] Do something new with each of your children that might inspire them to dream big. What was your takeaway from the event?

LESSON 14

A Purposeful Parent is Their Children's *Biggest Cheerleader*

Overview

A child's confidence, self-esteem, and overall well-being are constantly being developed and shaped. In the critical childhood and adolescent stage of development, having the unconditional love, support, and encouragement from a parent creates an environment where they feel valued and can develop in healthy ways. Purposeful parents should remember not to just coach their child but also to be their biggest cheerleader. This lesson will offer insight on how to cheer for your children and its importance in their lives.

Getting Started

Your children need to know you take great pleasure in them. They need expressions of your encouragement and praise every day. Too many parents try to win their child's approval and acceptance, but your objective is not to win a popularity prize from your children, rather it is for you to give these things to them. God takes great delight in us, His children, just because we are His (Psalm 37:23; 149:4). In the same way our Heavenly Father lavishes His love on us, so we should reflect this characteristic of God to our children through our encouragement, support, and affirmations every day.

God takes great delight in us, His children, just because we are His (Psalm 37:23; 149:4).

If encouraging and cheering on your child are not things you have done regularly thus far, you may initially feel a wall of resistance from them. However, continue to express to them how proud you are of them and offer them accolades wherever you can. Your children are a reservoir that you must fill with love and encouragement. Sooner or later, your children will discover the source.

There are two opposing principles concerning acceptance and support. The first principle is from the worldly philosophy that you must perform in order to be accepted. The second principle, from God, says you perform because you are accepted (Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 6:20). As a parent, you should aim to raise your children under the second principle, in which

they perform because they are accepted, valued, and were bought by God by the blood of Jesus (Jeremiah 29:11; Ephesians 2:10). Failing to lead from the second principle can exasperate your children as no one can perform well enough on earth to earn unconditional acceptance.

What type of parent may be unintentionally leading their children from the first principle? Here are some examples. The first is the **absent parent**. This is the parent who is away from their children most of their waking hours. The truth is that children do not know the difference between a justified or unjustified reason for being away. All they know is their dad and mom are not there.

Second is the **silent parent**. This is the parent who is present in the household, but because of fear and insecurity is silent when they are needed most. They do not assume the responsibility for setting the spirituality in their home and are silent at key moments. The silence is painful.

Third is the **abusive parent**. This is the parent who is verbally, sexually, and/or physically abusive. Children of an abusive parent are crushed in their self-worth. The scars from a parent's tongue can be as damaging as those from physical abuse.

Fourth is the **violent parent**. This is the parent who has fits of anger, temper fits, and outbursts of coarse language. Children who grow up in this environment conclude that the only emotion they can display is anger, and the only way to resolve their own emotional problems is through violence and anger.

Fifth is the **immoral parent**. This is the parent who breaks the rules. When parents break the rules themselves, they will produce children who are comfortable crossing the line.

Sixth is the **non-expressive parent.** This is the parent who never offers appropriate expressions of love to their children (words of affirmation; hugs, etc.). When this happens, the children are left with a void in their hearts.[8]

As a parent, you must decide you are not going to leave this type of inheritance to your children. This does not mean that you will be a perfect parent, or that you are solely

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8 This information was adapted from two graduate classes taught at Oral Roberts: Christian Approaches to Counseling (1994) by Dr. Ed Decker and Pastoral Care (2000) by Dr. Tom Mathew.

responsible for your children's decisions. However, if you want to be their biggest their cheerleader you must learn to express your love and support in intentional and healthy ways just as your Heavenly Father encourages all of His children.

REFLECTION

- Have you ever fallen into one of the six "exasperating" parent categories? How can you safeguard yourself from falling back into those patterns?
- How do you show unconditional love to your children?

Digging Deeper

Cheerleaders do many things, but the most important thing they do is cheer. The word *cheer* means to shout for joy, to encourage, and to praise. As a purposeful parent, your child should see you as being the one who is always there to shout with joy over their accomplishments, encourage them to always do their best, and praise them for their efforts. Zephaniah 3:17 gives us a beautiful picture of the way God delights over us. It says, "He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing" (NIV).

Notice there is no mention of winning or losing. God delights over us just because we are His children. Similarly, we should cheer for our children regardless of the outcome.

Notice there is no mention of winning or losing. God delights over us just because we are His children. Similarly, we should cheer for our children regardless of the outcome. Cheer when your child wins and cheer when they lose, praising effort as much as you praise success. It sends a powerful message of love to children when you are there supporting them regardless of the outcome. Just seeing you there, cheering them on, speaks volumes to a child about the value you place on them.

Another concern of cheerleaders is to boost the team's spirit. Likewise, parents should encourage and inspire their child's spirit, take care not to crush it with careless words or thoughtless actions. The game of life is not always easy; it can be very discouraging and even overwhelming at times. Dads and moms can play a huge role in determining the "team spirit" of their children. Encouraging words when things are not going well will always be remembered and treasured by your child. This warning to parents is found in Colossians 3:21 which says, "Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged" (NIV).

Another important thing cheerleaders do is to console their team when they lose. Paul described this sentiment in 2 Corinthians 1:3–4 when he said, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God" (NIV). A purposeful parent should be there for their child when they don't succeed, modeling how to handle disappointment and find comfort in the solace of their Heavenly Father. Cheerleaders don't take off from the next game just because their team lost the last one. They are right back out there the next time, helping the team come back from defeat and continuing to press forward; so should parents do this for their children.

REFLECTION

- Describe how your parents cheered for you growing up. How do you think this has affected your role as a parent to your children?
- How did your dad and mom display unconditional love to you?

Purposeful Parenting Moments

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Action Step

- [ ] Reflect on the six types of exasperating parents. If you have ever fallen into one of these categories, sit down with your children and explain what you have learned from this lesson. Then ask their forgiveness for your wrong or inattentive behavior.
- [ ] Every day for the next two weeks, find a way to cheer for or encourage your children in some fashion. What was their response? How did you feel after the two weeks?
- [ ] Write each of your children a card or note to celebrate an accomplishment (small or large) this week. What was their reaction?

LESSON 15

A Purposeful Parent Parents *for a Lifetime*

Overview

Once you become a parent, there is no "term limit" to your role. Purposeful parents must realize that it is very important their children know that they will be there for them, not just today, but also in the future. Even as adults, children need their parents to speak into their lives, walk them through new seasons of life, and mentor them as they step into the role of parenthood for themselves. In this lesson, you will begin to explore the journey of lifetime parenting and the commitment purposeful parents make to their children. Parents often find themselves parenting multiple generations. Even after your children are grown, your grandchildren will continue to benefit from your love, spiritual guidance, experience, and wisdom. Deuteronomy 4:9 reminds us of this: "Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them" (NIV).

Getting Started

What kind of legacy will you leave your children? Your legacy will be established over your lifetime and your children's lifetimes. As a parent, you must live for the finished product, not just what is done in a few short years. While there are critical times of development in a child's life, from birth through adulthood, children continue to learn and be influenced by their parents. For all of your life, you should keep in mind that your children are the greatest investment in which to put your time, energy, and resources.

This study has hopefully challenged you to more fully embrace your role as a parent and added a few tools to your parenting toolbox. Parenting is more than just skills though, it is about stewarding the godly privilege you have as a spiritual leader to the next generation. As the spiritual leader of your home, you must commit not only to pray *with* your children but also *for* them each and every day. By praying, you are building up a line of defense between your children and the harm Satan wishes on them. You must also pray for yourself, that God will guide you through the different stages of parenting and that His wisdom will be the source from which you draw to lead your children, grandchildren, and even your great-grandchildren.

REFLECTION

- How do you anticipate your role as a parent changing when your children are in their teenage, young adult, and adult years?
- Spend some time writing out the ways you hope to continue to influence your children, even as they grow into adults.

Digging Deeper

Most people remember the good coaches they had during childhood. Out of respect and appreciation, you may still call them "Coach" even if they haven't been your coach for years. But for parents, the coaching never stops. You know you have been a good coach when your child still values your coaching even when they are out on their own. You will never get too old to guide your children.

Don't be afraid to speak often of the future and remind your children that you will always be there for them.

A parent should always be aware of the lifelong responsibilities that come with the title Mom or Dad (Psalm 127:3). It is very important that your child knows you will be there for them, not just today, but also in the future. Don't be afraid to speak often of the future and remind your children that you will always be there for them.

When a parent is there for life, your child feels great security. This security is important to children no matter their age. Your children need for you to be a constant source of stability in their lives; the one that they can always depend on, someone who doesn't change just because they become adults. You can still be that rock in their life, no matter their age.



Make a lifetime commitment to your child. Let them know you will always be there for them and will never stop loving them. No matter how old your children become, they can benefit from your experience, wisdom, and knowledge. Remember, you will always be their parent.

A story from the 1924 Olympics drives this point home. Bill Havens was expected to bring home the gold medal in the Canadian canoeing singles event. Bill's wife was expecting their child, and her due date coincided with the Olympics. Bill decided to stay home with his wife and welcome his son into the world. During the 1952 summer Olympics Bill received a telegram which read, "Dear Dad . . . Thanks for waiting around for me to get born in 1924. I'm coming home with the gold medal you should have won." It was signed, "Your loving son, Frank." Bill's son won the gold medal in the 10-thousand-meter Canadian singles canoeing event.[9] A parent may never receive his own accolades, but every effective parent will still win gold.

REFLECTION

- How did your parents continue to pour into your life as a young adult/adult? How did this affect you?
- What are some ways you can begin to assure your children that you will be there for them throughout their entire lives?

Purposeful Parenting Moments

Ignite Parenting recognizes that not all relationships are created equal. If these action steps seem too difficult, we encourage you to adjust your next step to fit the unique relationship you have with each of your children.

Action Step

- [ ] Sit down with your children and ask them to tell you what they see you doing in your life that they would like to do. What did you learn?
- [ ] Discuss with each of your children your hopes and dreams for their life. What was their response?
- [ ] Sit down with each of your children and tell them about the ways you hope to still be part of their lives even when they are adults. What were their thoughts?

9 Stuart Mayho, "Bill's Choice," Momentary Reflections, May 22, 2010, https://momentaryreflections. wordpress.com/tag/bill-havens/ (accessed June 3, 2021).



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