**Shepherding a child’s heart**

“Shepherding a child’s heart” is the name of some excellent material on Christian parenting produced by Ted Tripp.

This booklet contains the handouts/outlines that accompany 12 video presentations. These presentations can be purchased either on DVD or for download:

* available on DVD (e.g. from [www.10ofthose.com](http://www.10ofthose.com))
* download from Vimeo <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/shepherding>

There is an excellent book of the same name which is well worth buying and reading alongside the video presentations:

* Hard copy (e.g. from [www.10ofthose.com](http://www.10ofthose.com))
* E-book / Kindle (amazon.co.uk)

Further, there is also a “Shepherding a child’s heart: parent’s handbook”. This contains thoughtful and searching questions and study projects to help parents put Biblical parenting into practice:

* Hard copy (e.g. from [www.10ofthose.com](http://www.10ofthose.com))
* E-book / Kindle (amazon.co.uk)

Each handout/outline below concludes with some discussion questions which are drawn from the Parents’ Handbook.

**Course outline**

1. Getting to the heart of behaviour

2. You’re in charge

3. Your child’s development: shaping influences

4. Your child’s development: Godward orientation

5. Examining your goals

6. Discarding unbiblical methods

7. Embracing Biblical methods – communication

8. Embracing Biblical methods – appeal to conscience, life of communication

9. Embracing Biblical methods – the discipline process in the early years

10. Shepherding Children Ages 0-5 (continued)

11. Shepherding Children Ages 6-12

12. Shepherding Teens

**1. Getting to the Heart of Behaviour**

**1. We live out of our hearts**

Proverbs 4:23, “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”

a. The heart sets the course of life

b. All behaviors have their origins in the heart

**2. The Bible uses the term *heart* much differently than our contemporary culture does**

a. Culture – *heart* refers to our soft, emotional side.

b. Bible – *heart* refers to all of the immaterial part of humans, uses terms like *soul*, *spirit*, *mind*, *inner man* as well as *heart*.

c. 700 passages refer to *heart*.

d. *Heart* is about thinking, remember, knowing and other cognitive activities.

**3. *Heart* is a major theme in the ministry of Christ recorded in the Gospels**

a. Law is applied in terms of the heart

i. For example: adultery and murder

b. Christ does not draw behavior lines but says that your sin is in your heart.

i. Note Mark 7

ii. Nothing that enters a man can make him unclean; rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him unclean

iii. Concerns about fairness, deceit, and slander are heart issues

**4.** “**Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks**”

Luke 6:43-45 "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, 44 for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. 45 The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

a. Trees are recognized by their fruit (Luke 6)

i. Note the illustration about hanging apples

ii. Watch for monofilament apples in your child’s behavior

iii. Real fruit is not produced by manipulation and behavior modification (e.g. bribing them, shaming them, threatening them)

iv. Manipulation does not address the real need of the heart

b. Behaviorism presents a false basis for ethics.

i. Behaviorism trains the heart in wrong ways—whatever parents use to motivate

their children will ultimately train their hearts

ii. Relying on behavior means the gospel will never be central—you can’t tag the gospel onto the end of a threat

iii. Behaviorism shows the idols of our hearts

**5. See graphic on Ungodly Attitudes and Godly Attitudes**

a. No one has better resources for understanding children than the Christian who has the word of God

b. It is the attitudes of the heart that push and pull behavior

c. Behaviorism can produce right behavior for the moment, but ultimately these behaviors will wither and die, just like the apples hanging on the tree by monofilament line.

d. When training a two-year-old, begin with using the language of the heart

**6. Tremendous benefits of focusing on the heart.**

a. Keeps attention on the heart, not just behavior—looking for the sin under the sin

i. Behavior shows the overflow of the heart

ii. Family photo at Niagara Falls demonstrated a failure to understand heart issues

b. If we focus on the heart our focus will be on the gospel – we have no other place to go but the Cross

c. The most important benefit is to engage our children, not just reprove them

**7. The word of God gives us sufficient resources to understand our children**

a. We need to dig deeply into the word of God and live richly out of the word of God.

**For discussion and prayer**

1. What are some of the reasons you/we get sidetracked with behaviour?

2. What questions can you develop (questions that cannot be answered ‘yes’ or ‘no’) that will help you draw your children out in ways that focus correction and discipline on heart issues?

3. How do you need to apply these truths to your life in order to move toward your children with integrity and insight?

4. What are some of the ways that you must pray for yourself and your children if you are to apply these things to your correction, discipline and motivation of your children?

5. What phrases in the verses below fill you with joy, hope and courage as you strive to provide biblical structures of discipline for your children?

Ephesians 3:20, 2 Peter 1:3-4, 2 Chronicles 16:9, Psalm 139:23-24

**2. You’re in charge!**

**1. Understanding authority is as foundational as the importance of the heart**

a. Our culture sees derived authority produced in one of two ways: either by overwhelming force OR consent

b. The idea of intelligent people willingly submitting to the authority of others is

increasingly foreign in our culture: Young people *view* authority as someone over them telling them what to do. Many young people want to *avoid* being in authority—they consider it unfair

c. So, many parents give away their authority over their children: parents end up begging, cajoling, threatening, making suggestions etc. The idea of biblical authority is lost

**2. The Biblical view is that God has made parents to be authorities**

a. Succumbing to unbiblical pressures, we reduce obedience to a matter of (our) personal convenience. But this undermines biblical authority – and authority then becomes about me rather than about God

b. Gracious authority is a blessing to your children. Children need parental authority because they lack maturity, wisdom and life experience

c. God has given parents this role: to be his agent, his ambassador in the lives of their kids

d. Genesis 18:19 — you have a mandate from God; you are on God’s errand

e. You are God’s agent for discipline, correction and nurture in the life of your child

**3. Implications for your children**

a. It is a blessing for them to be under authority

b. God gives authority to parents, to be in charge of children

c. Thus, it is appropriate for parents to give direction

**4. The message for your children**

a. “There is a God in heaven

i. He is kind

ii. He has made you and me and all things for his glory

iii. God in his kindness has put you in a family for your good

b. “And so, obeying Mom and Dad is good for you: It is blessing for you to obey mommy and daddy. We insist on your obedience because we know that is what is good for you”

c. Mom and Dad are under authority too

**5. Sinful anger confuses children and muddies the waters in family life**

a. Your anger frames discipline incorrectly…

i. It makes the problem between you and the child, rather than a problem between the child and God

ii. When children are not submitting to their parents, they are not submitting to God

b. If you are thinking rightly about the nature of your authority as a parent, it will keep you from the huge temptation to personalize your child’s disobedience

i. This makes the disobedience about you the parent

ii. Your child’s responsibility to obey you is ultimately about obeying God

c. You require obedience because it is God’s plan – *not* because we simply insist on obedience and we’re big enough to insist on it

**6. God’s call to be an authority provides…**

a. Confidence to provide direction

b. A mandate to act: I have no choice

c. Parents who are called to shepherd their children on God’s behalf

i. Don’t give children the idea that they are independent decision makers and that the role of the parent is to simply to suggest alternatives—this is not a healthy message to give to a three-year-old

**7. When you give away your authority…**

a. You give your children an appetite for freedom that does not exist. Nowhere in God’s plan for you is the notion that you are an independent person with no authorities over you

b. How the Bible defines freedom - Psalm 119:44-45: “I will continually obey your law forever and ever and I will walk about in freedom for I have sought out your precepts.”

c. Our culture equates parenting with being care provider, not an authority.

d. The Bible says you are the authority in your children’s lives to nurture and develop them. God has called you to be the shepherd of your child – a comprehensive task

**8. Understanding God’s calling necessitates:**

a. Clear objectives: What are short and long term goals for each of your children?

b. Humility in your task: You function as God’s agent - Your children are not yours to do with as you please

c. That there is no place for unholy, human anger in the nurture of children

See James 1:19-20, “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires.”

**9. Living under authority is designed to be a blessing for children**

a. Discipline is *corrective*, not *punitive*: You are bringing the corrections and reproofs of life because they have sinned against God – not coming with anger because they have sinned against me

b. Discipline is designed to restore: The goal is to restore my child to right relationship with God

c. Discipline is an expression of love. Proverbs 13:24; Hebrews 12:5; Revelation 3:19

d. Understanding authority biblically is foundational for doing your job as a parent

**For discussion and prayer**

1. Look up the following passages. What do they teach us about parental authority?

Genesis 18:19, Deut. 21:18-21, Prov 1:8-9, 4:1-2, 6:20-23, 23:22, Lk 2:51-52,

Eph 6:1-4, Col 3:20-21, 1 Thess 2:11-12

2. Why is it important that nurture and correction orbit around a God who has been sinned against – and not a parent who is offended? What difference should this make?

3. Do you struggle to be an authority who is *kind?* How can you exhibit the Christ-like gentleness of Matthew 11:29-30? What are some areas in which you need to grow in graciousness?

4. How can you present your children the benefits of being a person under authority? What are some of the things you need to teach them? How / when / where can you do that?

5. How do these passages bring biblical hope? Isa. 41:10, 2 Chron. 7:14, John 15:3-5.

6. Make a prayer list (a) for yourself and your spouse as you seek to be kind authorities in your children’s lives; (b) for your children, that they might willingly place themselves under godly authority.

**3. Your child’s development: shaping influences**

**1. Definition of Shaping Influences**

a. Events and circumstances in a child’s development that prove to be catalysts for the person they become

b. Biblical basis for thinking about shaping influences

i. Genesis 18:19

ii. Deuteronomy 6:2 – an exhortation to train our children

iii. Proverbs 22:6 – what I do impacts upon my children

iv. Ephesians 6:4 – the training and admonition of the Lord

c. The person your child becomes is the product of his life experience and how he responds to that life experience (i.e. to the shaping influences of life)

**2. Examples of Shaping Influences**

a. Family structure—includes the myriad of different combinations of relationships that form a family’s background and history

b. Family values—what is important to mom & dad? Family sayings… unspoken values… what is praiseworthy

c. Family boundaries—what is private, what do you share? Relationships open or closed? (Do your kids know about your money… or not?). Attitude to keeping secrets.

d. Family roles—children learn how to be parents as they observe mom and dad.

e. Family conflict resolution—how are issues resolved? Does a family know how to talk through problems… listening well… or just walking away or using power plays… or non-verbal.

f. Response to failure—what happens when mistakes and failures occur?

g. Family history—major events in the life of a family, like births, marriages, divorces, deaths, moves, poverty, etc.

h. Education—type and form

i. Instability of the culture

**3. Two mistakes that are made regarding shaping influences**

a. Denial—saying that children are unaffected by early childhood experiences

b. Determinism—assuming children are simply the product of shaping influences

For instance: “If I provide the proper environment, it will automatically produce the proper child.”

Remember: we can’t save our children

**4. Your kids are never passive responders to the shaping influences you provide**

a. They are active responders

b. Children respond to the Godward orientation of their hearts

If they know God… they will respond constructively to the shaping influences you provide

5. **What is this teaching about?**

a. It *is not* about how to get it right

b. It *is not* to guarantee that you kids will grow up in the faith

c. It *is* really about living before God in obedience

i. Fulfilling the calling God has given to you

ii. Trusting God for what God will bring in the lives of my children

**6. Then why bother?**

a. You do all that God has called you to do because God has called you to do it. And God likes to work through means

b. Ultimately, your children are responsible for their responses to your parenting. The condition of your child’s heart determines how he will respond to the shaping

influences of his life (see Proverbs 4:23)

d. Proverbs 9 provides the balance needed

i. The wise person responds well to instruction and grows wiser

ii. The foolish person resists instruction & sinks more deeply into rebellion

**7. We have three reasons for hope**

a. God’s purpose is to work through families

b. The gospel is suited to the deepest needs of your children

c. The gospel is powerful—it can transform your kids

**For discussion and prayer**

1. How do you see yourself responding either in determinism or denial?

2. Look up the following passages. How do they speak about the effect of shaping influences on children?

Proverbs 1:8-9, 3:1-2, 23:19, 23:22, 23:26, 29:21.

3. Shaping influences that we CAN control must be structured according to God’s Word. Evaluate the shaping influences you are providing in these areas (encouragements… things you want to change:

Family worship… conflict resolution… family values… roles of father and mother… success and failure.

4. There are influences that we CANNOT control. But we can shepherd the hearts of our children as they respond to these things. Assuming for a moment that you can’t change this situations how would you want to shepherd your child’s heart…

“There is a bully who sees your child’s gracious responses as weakness and has become a daily tormentor. Help him/her respond to this in a godly manner.”

5. Read Ephesians 3:16-21. Note all the encouragements in this passage that fill you with hope, joy and courage as you give yourself to what God calls you to.

**4. Your child’s development: Godward orientation**

**1. Children interpret the shaping influences of their lives through the Godward orientation of their hearts**

**2. Your children are designed for worship**

a. They will either respond with praise to God or they will bow before idols (just like all of us). Our children are instinctively and compulsively worshipping people

b. See Romans Chapter 1

**3. Why do children fail to worship the God they are made to worship?**

a. They do not cease being worshippers – Romans 1 (“their thinking became futile… exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images… exchanged the truth of God for a lie…”)

b. They end up worshipping and serving created things rather than the creator

c. They exchange the truth of God for a lie

i. This is what happens with all children, they will worship God or idols

ii. Your children are dazzled by God or they make the great exchange and worship created things rather than the Creator

**4. These idols are not statues, but the subtle idols of the heart**

a. Examples…

i. Power and influence

ii. Pride and performance

iii. Possessions

iv. Pleasure and sensuality / a rush

v. The fear of man or the desire for the approval of others / friendship

b. All of these things are indications of worshipping the wrong things

**5. Showing our kids the wonder and glory of who God is**

a. One of the most important callings God has given us: We want to show them that God is the one true object of worship

**6. The one truth that will help your children respond well to the shaping influences of life is to truly understand who God is**

a. Therefore we must help them to see the wonder of who God is

b. Psalm 145

i. No one can fathom the greatness of God

ii. “One generation will commend your works to another”

iii. The acts and attributes of God

iv. This psalm is a job description of parenting and how to worship God

c. What your children worship will tell them how to interpret life

d. So, we must give our children a vision for God and for God’s glory

**7. Note the brief survey of the Psalms that talk about the wonder of God**

a. Psalm 4:6-8 “You have filled my heart with joy.” – No greater joy available to us than Him.

b. Psalm 16:11 “You have made known to me the pleasures of life.” – The greatest and most satisfying pleasures are found in Him.

c. Psalm 27:2-4 “I want to dwell in the house of the Lord.”—Knowing God is the greatest deliverance is being with Him

d. Psalm 36:5-9 “They feast on the abundance of your house…” —Drink deeply of God’s river of life

e. Psalm 63:1-5 “You are my God, earnestly I seek you, my soul thirsts for you.” – your steadfast love is better than life

f. Psalm 73 “Whom have I in heaven but you?”

g. Psalm 81:10,16 “You will be satisfied.”

**8. The Kingdom parable in Matthew 13**

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” (Matthew 13:44)

a. The man gives all he has to acquire the precious treasure of the field—this is what the kingdom of heaven is like

b. Your children must come to the place where they say, “I must have God – no matter the cost.”

c. You can’t force them into the Kingdom. Your most important calling as a parent is to show them the glory of God

d. If you want your children to have a reason to sing on Sunday, you must present to them a glorious God. Only the worthiness of God will keep your children from the allure and perversion of mainstream entertainment

**9. Connecting the pieces: Why is this so important?**

a. What we do with God determines how we interpret the shaping influences of life

b. Solid and lasting joys are found in knowing God

c. Observation: Rather than helping kids see the glories of God, many parents are feeding the idols

i. We fill our kids’ lives with stuff – & we take joy in seeing their joy in stuff

ii. We fill their lives with busyness and activities that relegate God to a place of almost irrelevance in their lives

**10. If you are going show your kids the wonder of God, you must be dazzled by God yourself**

a. You can’t give away something you don’t have

b. Your children CAN see and embrace the glory of God! Your kids can get it

c. The Christian life begins with glory – seeing glory in Jesus and wanting Him. Christian growth is about glory. Get ourselves before God again – so we can be dazzled by God’s glory so you can bring that to your children

d. Tension: I want this… but I fall so short. Do not focus on your failings, but on your desire to know God’s goodness and glory

**For discussion and prayer**

1. Godward orientation will determine how our children respond to life’s circumstances. How do we see this link in the following Bible passages?

Gen. 50:19-21, Pss 10:1-11, 14:11, Prov. 4:23, 9:7-10, Mark 7:21-23, Luke 6:45

2. What do you discern to be the ways your child is responding to his life experience? Do you see him responding in love for God and faith in God’s care and goodness, or do you see him pushed and pulled by other things?

3. What are some of the ways he shows that he is responding to life as a child who knows and loves God, or as a child who is still quite willful and bent on pleasing himself?

4. Children either respond to life out of the grace of God’s covenant and know his peace and joy, or they respond with some form of idolatry such as pride and performance, power and influence, pleasure and sensuality, or love of possessions. What do you observe as the lens through which your children are looking at the world?

5. How can YOU deepen your experience of the pleasures of knowing God, so that you can reflect to your children in deeper measure the joys of communion and fellowship with the living God?

**5. Examining your goals**

**1. Examples of unbiblical goals**

**a. Developing special skills**

i. Special skills are not bad in themselves; they have a place in your child’s

development

ii. Think: What are the parent’s motivations? (may be good or not. E.g. re-living own childhood, bragging rights, etc)

iii. Think: What must be sacrificed to achieve these goals? (family meals, participation in church, family devotions, false values taught, etc)

iv. Think: What are the values that will be taught by the leaders of these activities? (e.g. false views of beauty, success, etc)

**b. Psychological adjustment**

i. Where does the Bible encourage a psychologized way of looking at ourselves?

E.g. Is unconditional positive self-regard Biblical and good?)

E.g. Are children taught to have a biblical view of competition and how to return good for evil?

**c. Saved children**

i. Temptation to think that if my child gets saved, it will be easy to work with him

ii. Take note of some important cautions:

Can’t know for sure that our children are saved (same with adults) – hearts can deceive.

And a believing child will still have times of disobedience, doubt (as we do).

iii. We can’t save our kids – salvation is a work of grace that God alone does in our children. We pray… we set Jesus before them in the home every day… hoping that God will work through those means… but it is his work.

**d. Family worship**

i. Family worship is means to an end, it is not the end in itself. Need to forge the connection between family worship and the rest of life. The end is knowing God. Be creative with family worship – can do lots in just a few minutes.

**e. Well-behaved children**

i. Well-behaved kids are a *secondary benefit* of biblical child rearing. This is not a primary goal

ii. Emphasis on well-behaved children can obscure dealing with heart issues. Can just respond to our children in order to please others. Can sever good manners from truly loving God and others – become tools of manipulation.

iii. The importance of manners is properly rooted in Philippians 2 - preferring others above yourself

**f. Good education**

i. Are good grades a biblical objective?

ii. Grades don’t reflect how much effort and hard work have been done

iii. A better gauge: what will produce character strength in adulthood?

**g. Control**

i. Goal is to manage kids—this is not a biblical goal

**2. What is our goal for our children?**

**a. Best summed up the first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism**

i. “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever”

ii. This is where parents need to start with their kids

**3. What if our kids are not Christians? How can I hold out loving God to them?**

**a. Even if your kids don’t know God they are still commanded to obey God. And this is the only place of goodness and blessing.**

**b. There is, of course, a tension here. Our kids are called to do something they cannot do without grace**

**c. This tension shows how profoundly we need the grace and power of the gospel.**

**For discussion and prayer**

1. Children (and us all) are made to know God. Note how these passages describe the pleasures of knowing Him:

Pss. 4:6-7, 16:2,11, 36:5-9, 42:1-2, 63:1-8, Isa 55:1-2

2. What ways can you list that parents unwittingly offer alternate pleasures and joys that distract their children from knowing God?

3. Which items from this list of ungodly attitudes of heart might be motivating you to encourage the development of your children’s skills?

Anxiety, envy, love of self, covetousness, fear of man, pride, desire for approval, greed, selfish ambition

4. How does Matthew 25:14-30 help us think biblically about our children’s talents and abilities?

5. What are some of the biblical non-negotiables through which you must screen the activities of your children to ensure that they are not in conflict with the goal of training them to live for God’s glory?

E.g. “The activity must not conflict with worship on the Lord’s Day”

5. Find phrases in the passage below with which you can fortify yourself and encourage your heart as you show you kids the glories of God:

James 1:22-25, 4:7-10, 2 Peter 3:10-14, 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1

6. How can you pray for yourself and your friends in light of these passages of Scripture?

**6. Discarding unbiblical methods**

**1. What are the methods we use to accomplish our goals?**

**2. We cannot be indifferent to methodology**

a. Biblically, the methods are as important as the objective - God is not only concerned with what we do, but how we do it

b. If we go to the culture for methods, we open ourselves up to unbiblical influences: e.g. in media… in conversation with friends…

c. Biblical goals require biblical methods – only godly methods will bring God glory and accomplish his ends

**3. Unbiblical methods**

a. “I didn't turn out so bad”: unquestioningly accepted own parents’ methods

i. e.g. unloving discipline, overbearing, confrontational, abusive… OR caving in, permissive, easily manipulated

ii. No biblical assessment is made

b. Pop psychology

i. Common examples: whatever works is good – bribery… making contracts

ii. BUT: these approaches are at best superficial: bribery and contracts…

* feed on greed and self-interest.
* Children don’t learn biblical reasons for obedience
* These methods don't address the heart, only behaviour.

c. Behavior Modification

i. This is the most popular method of child rearing in our culture

ii. Reward good behavior; ignore or punish bad behavior.

iii. \*\***Whatever modifies behavior inevitably trains the heart.\*\***

In this case, the heart is trained toward greedy self-interest and obtaining rewards. A lust-driven life… giving what children desire. Teaching children to do proper things… for wrong motives.

d. Emotionalism: An appeal to pluck the child’s heart strings.

E.g. “Honey, it makes me feel so sad when you behave like that”

E.g. Pastor shames child - poor behavior reflect on his ministry.

E.g. “You’re making God really unhappy right now.”

E.g. “The Chair” – cruel… and ineffective at addressing the heart. Only taught child how to avoid the emotional privation of being on the chair… didn’t teach her how to love God… or discern her own heart-attitudes.

e. Punitive correction – threat of punishments

i. The idea is to make children pay for what they have done – controlling them through punishment.

ii. E.g. Grounding is the most popular form of punitive correction – grounded from other children, bikes, phones, etc.

iii. Problem? Does not address heart issues. Grounding does not do something FOR the child… it does something TO the child.

iv. Not designed to improve character, but to punish behavior.

f. Erratic eclecticism.

i. Erratic: Moving all around – no consistency

ii. Eclecticism: Ideas randomly selected from different sources

iii. A catch-all methodology—parents don’t know what to do – frustrated and angry… and their children are confused by lack of consistency

**4. Where do unbiblical methods take us? – What fruits do they bear?**

a. Since the heart determines behavior, these methods all lead to superficial parenting rather than shepherding the hearts of our children. Because…

b. These methods address behavior and miss the point of biblical discipline – which addresses behaviour through the heart.

c. The deep needs within the heart are ignored. (The problem is not just that Susie is yelling at her brother – the problem is her heart’s anger, etc).

d. Unbiblical methods provide children with functional idols to organize his life

e. These methods train the heart away from Christ: It is impossible to have a preoccupation with behavior and end up at the Cross.

**5. By focusing on the heart we see that the only hope we have is at the Cross**

a. Our children need transformation from the inside out

b. We want to see the shepherding of our children bring them to confrontation with God

**6. Imagine you are trying to deal with a child’s failure to do his homework**

a. Bribery: “Do your work, I’ll take you to the ball game.”

b. Emotionalism: “PLEASE, do your work… it makes me want to cry...”

c. Behavior modification: “Every day you do your work, I’ll put your name in a jar, and you might get a prize!”

d. “I didn’t turn out so bad”: “I didn’t do my work. I got smacked. So I learned to do my work.”

**7. What do each of these approaches accomplish?**

a. Do any of these approaches lead to the truth that God sent his Son into the world to free people from their sin? These approaches all train the heart away from the Cross

b. All of these approaches produce distance between parents and children

i. The child will eventually resent the attempts at manipulation – will resent crass attempts at manipulation of behaviour, and absence of real communication.

ii. Depth of relationship will be lost

iii. Note the illustration of Tedd’s friend from college

**8. We need to think of the methods that God has given us to address issues of the heart**

\*\* God is not only concerned about the WHAT of parenting… but also the HOW. And the Bible speaks to the question of methods… \*\*

**For discussion and prayer**

1. God is not simply concerned with the externals of behavior, God is concerned with the heart. How do these passages make this clear?

Prov. 4: 23, 1 Sam. 16: 7, 2 Chron. 16: 9, Deut. 10: 12– 13, Ezek. 14: 1–8, Joel 2:12-13

2. The Bible also has much to say about the relationship of behavior to the heart. Notice how these passages make that connection. See Matthew 5:28, Matthew 15:18, Mark 7: 21– 23

3. To take this all one step further, the Bible also teaches that when the heart is cleansed, the behavior will take care of itself. See Matthew 23: 26 Ezekiel 36: 25– 27. No wonder David prays as he does in Psalm 51: 10, 17: “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. . . The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

4. Think: What is the point of appeal in many of our child training methods? The first couple blanks have been filled in for you.

*Training method Point of appeal*

Bribery Child’s greed

Shaming children Child’s emotions

Offering prizes

Punishment

Grounding

Contracts

Ignoring bad behavior

Praising good behavior

Time out

Yelling and screaming

4. You need to ask yourself some tough questions like the following:

• What am I expecting will motivate my child to hear my correction?

• What am I using in this discipline situation to encourage behavior that I think is appropriate?

• In this discipline situation, what is the point of appeal to my child?

• Am I speaking to the root issue or to the fruit issue?

• How will this correction, discipline or motivational statement move Him from right behaviour to right motives?

5. God is your ally as you seek to deal with root issues in your parenting. God is the searcher of hearts. Make notes on this from Ps. 139: 23– 24, Heb. 4:12– 13, 1 Chron. 28:9, Ps. 26:2

“While you are not the searcher of hearts and you must avoid assigning motivations to your children, you can pray that God, who does search hearts, will help you and your children to understand the things that push and pull their behavior. The things you have been thinking about in this chapter place you squarely into spiritual warfare. It is not easy to deviate so radically from the norms and practices of the culture around you. You risk being misunderstood. You may sometimes feel lonely. You will have times of doubting whether you are on the right track. The Word of God fortifies you for spiritual battle. Take time to read through Ephesians 6:10-18 and make notes of encouragement for yourself.”

**7. Embracing Biblical methods: Communication**

**1. Goals and methods should be complimentary**

**2. Life that is worth living should be lived under the Lordship of Jesus Christ**

**3. Proverbs 23: instruction on rich, full communication and appropriate use of physical discipline**

a. See Proverbs 23:13-19, 22, 26

i. Physical discipline of children along with rich, sensitive communication

ii. We tend to separate these—the harsh disciplinarian vs the tender sensitive parent

iii. Proverbs 23 puts them together

b. This passage describes rich communication that prohibits cold, tyrannical discipline

c. Provides a context for honest, open communication in which the child:

i. Can feel known and understood

ii. Can even grow in the understanding of himself

**4. Communication: dialogue, not monologue**

a. Communication is not just the ability to express ourselves

b. Learn to talk *with* your children and not just talk *to* them

c. The finest art of communication

i. Is *not* your ability to express your ideas

ii. It *is* the ability to *understand your child*

iii. Skilled communication enables you to help your children articulate their thoughts

d. We need to be people who are able to draw others out (Prov 20:5)

i. Learn to ask good qualitative questions that can’t be answered by “yes” or “no.”

ii. We need to listen to what is being said

iii. Also listen for what is not being said

iv. Let you child know that you delight in them

e. Certain questions can be used to gain certain types of information

i. “What?” questions reveal information

ii. “How?” questions reveal process

iii. “What did you want to accomplish?” questions reveal motivation

iv. “Help me understand” questions also reveal motivation

v. “How often?” or “where?” questions reveal patterns / themes

vi. Understand the value of multiple-choice questions

f. Parents need restraint to ask good questions, using pleasant words to promote instruction. Need God’s help to this end!

**5. When something has gone wrong**

a. Focus on understanding your child

b. Your goal is to engage your child: You want more than “what. ” You want to understand “why” — focus on what is going on inside your child

c. The example of the new sneakers

i. Focus on the explanation that shows what the child was thinking

ii. Helps you see the hopes and struggles of your child’s heart

**6. Your good desire can be summarized in several ways**

a. Your child’s behavior reflects his heart. What is the abundance of the heart?

b. Internal issues of the heart are more important than behavior

c. You want to be able to look at the world through your child’s eyes

i. This is a tremendous encouragement to your children

d. You want to bring the encouragement of the gospel to your children

i. The incarnation of Christ is a wonderful model for us

ii. He lived in our world and he understands our struggles

iii. Christ is able to sympathize with our weaknesses

iv. Great encouragement in Hebrews 4:14-16

**7. Two functions as parent**

a. Stand above your child as his authority

b. Stand alongside your child as one who has experienced these same struggles

**8. Various types of communication**

a. Our communication needs to be multi-faceted and richly textured

b. I Thessalonians 5:14, “… admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.”

i. Different types of communication for different circumstances

ii. We can wound our children with a rebuke, when instruction is what is necessary

c. Types of communication (from Proverbs)

i. Encouragement

ii. Correction

iii. Rebuke

iv. Entreaty

v. Instruction

vi. Warning

vii. Teaching

viii. Prayer

d. Your communication will take many forms

i. Subtle, rich nuances for each form

ii. This is necessary for them to understand God’s ways and God’s truth

**For discussion and prayer**

1. What’s it like to talk with someone who delights in understanding you? What do they do as you converse?

2. What’s it like to talk with someone whose only interest is airing his own ideas? What’s it like to be corrected by someone who doesn’t care what you think?

3. Proverbs 18:13 says, “He who answers before listening – that is his folly and his shame.” How often are you a fool? Why do we do it!? Why is this shameful?

4. Look at Hebrews 4:11, 14-18. How well does Jesus understand us and identify with us? How does this bring us great comfort and hope? How, according to 5:2, does he deal with the ignorant and wayward?

5. What principles can you draw out for communication with your children? What stops you from genuinely trying to understand your children, especially in the context of correction? How might you better sympathise with your children, as Jesus does?

6. Sometimes writing out a prayer of confession and commitment helps us to articulate our deepest longings for change and renewal. Express to God your prayers for better communication with your children.

**8. Embracing Biblical methods:**

**Appeal to conscience, life of communications of**

**I: Appeal to Conscience**

**1. The conscience is our ally in making our correction and discipline effective in our children**

a. What is the conscience? The capacity that reasons about good and evil, that distinguishes between right and wrong

b. The conscience is always at work (Romans 2)

c. Your most powerful appeals to your kids will be appeals that smite the conscience

d. A graphic example: Jesus’ interaction with the Pharisees in Matthew 21:28-32, 33-46

i. Parable of the two sons—Jesus asks a question that appeals to the conscience

ii. Parable of the vineyard—Pharisees indicted themselves by their answer to Jesus

iii. Christ appeals to conscience – to their sense of right and wrong – dealing with root issues, not just surface issues

iv. Christ is answering their original question (verse 23) – one that is about his authority and that challenges his authority

v. Although the Pharisees didn’t repent, their own responses indicted them

**2. Appeal to our children’s conscience**

a. Deal with issues of Godward orientation. Take correction beyond simply dealing with behavior to looking at issues of the heart

b. Address the heart by exposing sin

c. God has given your children a conscience to help them understand right from wrong

d. Example of the boy and the offering plate—his conscience was smitten by the gospel

e. Help your child to see himself as sinner, in need of the mercy of God. Help your child to see his need of grace. The focal point is to expose the inability to obey – with grace, and the Spirit’s help. The goal: lead your child to the Cross to find grace, transformation, and help

**3. Don’t lower God’s standard**

a. Lowering the standard allows children to keep that standard without grace. We settle for “just be nice.” But that’s not God’s standard.

b. Hypocrisy and self-righteousness come when we give our kids keepable standards

**II: Life of Communication**

**1. Communication is not just an event, it’s a lifestyle**

a. Communication *disciplines* and *disciples*

b. Often parents are too busy to talk unless something is wrong. Communication must be ongoing, all the time – this prepares for the difficult and strained moments.

c. The GOAL of communication: shepherding the heart

Help children understand themselves… how God works… how sin works… how the Gospel comes to them in their greatest needs… their motivations, wishes, desires… encouraging faith in Jesus Christ

**2. Counting the cost of making communication happen**

a. Honest, true communication is expensive, it takes time

b. Children require time and flexibility from their parents

c. Kids don’t pour out their hearts on schedule/on demand

d. A wise parent learns to talk when their kids are in the mood to talk

e. It is challenging to be a good listener to your kids

f. When your children are ready to talk, you have to be ready to engage them – we need to stop… listen… think about what’s being said or not said… praying silently… requires physical and spiritual stamina

g. We must be prepared to be honest with our kids – admitting sin, seeking forgiveness for sinning against our children

**3. Blessings of good communication within the parent-child relationship**

a. Note the chart about authority and influence – want to be a person of influence with your children

b. Influence reflects the willingness of a child to place himself under the parent’s authority because of trust

c. Your child will trust you when

i. He knows you love him

ii. He knows you understand him

iii. He knows you have invested yourself in him

iv. He knows you seek to see things through his eyes

v. He knows you help him flourish as himself

d. This kind of communication is tremendous preparation for relationships – as workers, husbands/wives, consumers, citizens, parents, church members

e. Sensitive communication leads to a full-orbed understanding of life

**4. Only biblical communication will expose the important areas of life**

a. All of life must be viewed from the perspective of God’s redemption and restoration of mankind

b. Christ will be relevant all the time in every situation

**5. Parenting is the main job that God has called you to do**

a. There is no way to measure the costs against the benefits

b. This biblical communication is what God has mandated us to do as parents

**For discussion and prayer**

1. An encouragement – Ted Tripp writes: “Instruction, motivation, discipline and correction will misfire if the gospel is not central and the conscience is not the target. The wrong focus is your offenses, hurts, unhappiness, desires, dreams, hopes and fears. The right focus is the gospel of grace and your children’s need to know and love and serve God. The wrong focus leads to endless debate and argument. Keeping the focus on biblical truth and appealing to the conscience leaves your child’s controversy with God and not with you. Whenever long discussions can take place without opening the Bible or talking about repentance, forgiveness and enablement from Christ, you have gotten off track.” (Parents handbook, p100).

2. Using God’s Words to appeal to our children’s consciences:

(a) Example: Your son receives correction in an angry and disrespectful manner. Later on you look with him at Proverbs 9:7-9. These are the sorts of questions you ask:

* What words describe what the parent does? Is it wrong for the parent to do these things?
* Two different people respond to the parent. Who are they? What are they called?
* How does the wise / righteous person respond?
* Which way of responding are you most like? (No one is always, without exception, in one place or the other?
* Which describes how you are right now? Which one describes what I long to see in you?
* What’s God calling you to do in response to my parenting?

(b) Over to you: You want to talk to your son/daughter about watching TV. How can you use Ephesians 5:1-11 to help critique a TV programme? What questions do you want to help them ask of the Bible passage? How can you use these verses to appeal to the conscience?

(c) Over to you: Your teenage daughter is speaking unkindly to her younger siblings. She thinks your objections are unreasonable. Think through James 3 (and especially vv13-17). How can you help her critique her speech? How can you keep the focus on God’s Word, and not on your own thoughts and ideas?

3. Practically, when might you engage in conversation with your children? (– formal conversations? – informal chats?) What will you need to do to grow a life of communication?

**9. Embracing Biblical methods: the discipline process in early years**

**I .The training objectives for the first five years of life**

**1. The first five years are marked by development and radical change**

a. Physical

b. Social

c. Intellectual

d. Spiritual

e. This can be overwhelming

**2. Overarching goal for the first five years: help your children be people under authority – training children to obey father and mother**

**3. The Circle of Blessing (Ephesians 6:1-3)**

a. Obey 🡪 Long life 🡪 Honor 🡪 Go well

b. We must make a gourmet presentation of this truth to our kids

i. Negative presentation invites rebellion and conflict

ii. Make a presentation that is attractive

c. Key definitions for terms in the circle of blessing

i. *Obey*: Submission to God’s authority (note: Godward focus) that causes a child to do what he is told by his parents immediately, without excuse, without complaint and without question

ii. *Honor*: Submission to God’s authority that causes a child to speak to his parents with respect for their role as God’s agent of nurture, direction and discipline

iii. *Go well*: The natural and spiritual blessings of obedience

1. The spiritual blessing is being where God wants you to be

2. There are also practical, natural blessings

iv. *Long life*: General principle (though not a universal one): the blessings of prosperity and protection, richness and fullness of life that God provides for a child who lives under His structure of authority

d. Note how the diagram is extended to illustrate what happens when the child moves outside of the circle of blessing – put themselves in a place of danger. So…

i. Discipline and correction—a rescue mission designed to restore the child to the circle of blessing. It is very positive.

ii. Discipline and correction is not what I do *to* my children, but *for* my children

**II. Physical discipline in the early years**

**1. Illustration of little girl with her doll**

**2. Think: what is a child’s most basic problem?**

a. Are children morally neutral? Just needing information?

b. Not a lack of information – the child’s problem is that he is a sinner

**3. Appropriate use of the rod of correction (Proverbs 13:24, 22:15, 23:13-14, 29:15,17)**

a. Definition: “A parent, in faith toward God and faithfulness towards his or her children, undertaking the responsibility of careful, timely, measured, and controlled use of physical discipline to underscore the importance of obeying God”

b. Aim: This rescues the child from continuing in his foolishness and coming to destruction

c. The description broken down:

i. A parental exercise—all Bible passages about physical discipline describe the parent as the one who is responsible for physical discipline (e.g. “discipline your son…”)

ii. An act of faith—parents must do this trusting God (God has called me to do this, and I’m going to trust him and his counsel)

iii. An act of faithfulness—recognizing that there is hope in discipline

iv. A responsibility—the parent determining to obey God

v. Careful and timely physical discipline – It is never a time for venting wrath. It is a rescue mission to restore your child to the circle of blessing

**4. Some distortions of physical discipline**

a. It is not a right to sinful anger (e.g. James 1:20) - anger in physical discipline is always wicked and wrong

b. It is not a right to hit our children capriciously. Parents are not to use physical force whenever they want. This is a violation of Ephesians 6:4

c. It is not venting frustration – this is wicked and destructive

d. It is not something you do when you don’t know what else to do

e. It is not retribution. Many parents have a punitive mindset. But it is not a child paying for his sins. Instead, physical discipline has the positive goal of restoration

f. It is not associated with vindictive anger

g. Your child should be restored and happy after physical discipline

**For discussion and prayer**

1. How do these passages describe the state of our hearts – and those of our children? Romans 3:10-18, Titus 3:3, Ephesians 2:1-3, Psalm 51:5, Psalm 58:3, Proverbs 22:15

2. The rod of correction is a response of obedience and faith on the part of the parent – trusting that God will use this means (among others) to help children escape from the folly that’s bound up in their hearts. What do these Bible passages have to say?

Proverbs 13:24, 22:15, 23:13-14, 29:15

3. Physical discipline is for defiant behaviour – not that which is childish or inconvenient. Can you think of illustrations of the difference between these behaviours?

4. How does Hebrews 12:5-11 help us understand discipline? – what motivates it? what is its purpose? in what sort of relationship does discipline take place?

5. If you’re a parent of young children think about your own situation: why is it so difficult to discipline children consistently? Why are we tempted to let things go?

6. Are you prone to sinful anger? How does the Bible speak to your situation? (See Eph 4:31-32, Col 3:8-12, James 1:19-20). What’s going on in your heart when your respond angrily? How do you need to approach disciplining your children differently?

**10. Shepherding children Ages 0-5 (continued)**

**Introduction**

*Before watching the presentation for session 10 read Ephesians 6:1-4 and consider what it might mean to become (more!) Biblical parents. You could sum it up like this…*

**1. Overarching goal for the first five years: help your children be people under authority – training children to obey father and mother**

**2. The Circle of Blessing (Ephesians 6:1-3)**

Obey 🡪 Long life 🡪 Honor 🡪 Go well

**3. The pattern for parents (Ephesians 6:4)**

* **FATHERS**

**Understand the authority you have over your children!**

* **DO NOT PROVOKE**

**Don’t provoke your children to sinful anger**

* **BRING THEM UP**

**Nurture your children with God’s kindness** (see Eph. 5:29)

* **IN THE DISCIPLINE**

**Train your children in God’s ways**

Our example

Our discipline – 5 “P’s” (Paul Dawson):

Pattern… Proportionate… Personal… Prompt… Painful

* **AND INSTRUCTION OF THE LORD**

**Instruct your children**

**1. Physical discipline is out of style in our culture**

a. Often rejected by people who have been physically abused by their parents

i. These kids never knew when they were going to be disciplined… discipline was often done capriciously and in anger… and their response was, “I will never do this to my kids”

ii. This response is appropriate - you must never do that to your kids! But don’t throw out what the Scriptures say because of what happened to you

b. The Bible is not unclear. Don’t be taken captive by hollow and deceptive philosophy about physical discipline that denies the Bible

**2. The Biblical basis**

Proverbs 13:24, 19:18, 22:15, 23:13-14, 29:15, 17

**3. How to do it biblically**

a. Privacy—discipline is not a spectator sport

b. Tell the child specifically what he has done or failed to do—the child knows what is coming and why

c. Secure an acknowledgement from the child—it is so important for the child to

acknowledge the discipline process

d. Remind the child of your objective: you’re in danger because you’ve not submitted to mom and dad, and we want to restore you to a place of blessing

e. Explain what you’re going to do (deal with your children according to different personalities, etc). Let them know you’re in control and your actions flow out of love

f. Practical details

g. Restoration: when you are done tell him how much you love him. Pray with your child and for him. If the child will not be restored here are two things to check: 1. Was my spirit wrong while disciplining? If so, ask for forgiveness. 2. Child may still be outside circle of blessing.

**4. Common questions:**

a. When physical discipline? Helpful to distinguish correction from discipline. Many things (especially with little children) require correction but not discipline. Only discipline for defiance.

b. What?

c. When is the child old enough? — When the child is old enough to *understand* your words and not obey

d. What if I am too mad? — Never discipline when you are mad or angry

e. What if we are not home? — If you are not at home, don’t discipline your kids

f. What if he did not hear me? — Would he have heard you if you whispered “would you like ice cream?”

g. When is he too old? — most effective with little children

h. What if it doesn’t work? — The primary reason it does not work is because

parents discipline in anger

i. Can I use time out instead? — No (but note the clarifications Ted makes)

j. If I listened to you, all I’ll ever do is…! — Not if it’s done biblically.

k. What if it is too late?

i. It is never too late—but you must train and instruct first

ii. It is not wise to implement a physical discipline process with older kids who were not disciplined as young children

**For discussion and prayer**

1. Ted Tripp writes that the “rod of correction is a response of obedience and faith on the part of the parent – trusting that God will use this means (among others) to help children escape from the folly that’s bound up in their hearts.” Look at Proverbs 13:24, 22:15, 23:13-14, 29:15

What do these Bible passages have to say?

What is “folly” (as opposed, say, to childishness)?

What happens if a child is not challenged?

2. Physical discipline is for defiant behaviour – not that which is childish or inconvenient. Can you think of illustrations of the difference between these behaviours?

3. Hebrews 12:5-11 helps us understand discipline: what motivates it? what is its purpose? in what sort of relationship does discipline take place?

**11. Shepherding children: ages 6-12**

“Parents of school age children are confronted with new challenges. The children are spending more time away from the direct supervision of mother or father. Since you cannot be with him all the time, you must build on those early lessons of being under a person of authority. The big lesson for these middle years is character development. He must know what to do in hundreds of situations that you cannot anticipate. He needs biblical wisdom. His conscience must be developed as the reasoning factor of the soul so that he will know what he ought to do even when you are not there. We must appeal to the child’s conscience, helping him to develop the capacity to reason to right conclusions using the Scriptures as a his guide. It is obvious that character development is not taught through the same methods as teaching a toddler to be under authority. Spanking works well to teach young children to obey, but is not effective at teaching a ten year old to be wise. We must address the heart using all the means of communication discussed in chapters 8-10 of *Shepherding a Child’s Heart.*”(Shepherding a child’s heart: parent’s handbook, p 122)

**Setting up the issue…**

You’ve tried to implement this course… loving disciplined etc… but…

**1. Many issues cannot be reduced to obedience—we need to get to the sin beneath the sin**

**2. The heart directs behavior**

a. Note the illustration from Matthew 15:17-20

b. It is what comes out of the heart that makes a man unclean

ungodly attitudes 🡪 ungodly behavior e.g. fighting

godly attitudes 🡪 godly behavior e.g. sharing

c. The danger is that parents isolate behavior issues from heart issues

i. Very easy for parents to focus on behavior instead of the heart (“I just want them to stop fighting and share”). The temptation: trying to produce behavioral change without addressing heart attitudes behind behavior

ii. For example the “Shut up Jar” illustration!

**3. Example: two kids fighting over a toy**

1. A fight over a toy is really a fight between two selfish kids.

It’s about the love of self

1. I could ignore the heart… modify behaviour… get the kids to share (but still from self-centred motives)
2. But does God commend right actions for wrong motives?

i. This is what Jesus condemned the Pharisees for – whitewashed tombs but full of bones (see Matt. 23:25-28)

ii. If you deal with the heart, the right attitudes will follow

**4. The Bible gives us great resources to understand heart attitudes**

1. A suggested and non-exhaustive list:

*Ungodly attitudes:*

Covetousness… vengeance… approval… hatred… fear of man… fear… anger… self-love… pride… anxiety… self-preservation… envy… rebellion

*Godly attitudes:*

Humility… contentment… peace… entrusting to God… laying down life… God’s approval… fear of God… love… love for others… generosity… submission… good of others… perfect love… peace-making

1. \*\* NB. the attitudes of heart push & pull our children’s behavior \*\*

E.g. revenge (e.g. “he hit me first” rather than entrusting himself to God)

E.g. pride

E.g. anger

E.g. approval

**5. As parents we want to give our children these truths**

a. Develop a heart notebook – look up and write down what the Bible has to say about heart issues. E.g. what does the Bible say about REVENGE?... find Bible illustrations like Joab… what does revenge look like for an 8 year old… what did Jesus do

**6. Importance of the heart: applied to concerns about electronic media**

a. Children are ready to deal with the Internet only when they gain insight into the attitudes of their heart.

b. Intuitive technical proficiency is not enough to prepare kids for the internet world. Danger of awakening appetites that have no place of fulfilment in the Law of God. There are dangers that they are simply not ready for.

**7. Importance of the heart: when we only address behaviour we will hypocritically distance ourselves from our child**

a. Sometimes we act as if having the right information is all that matters

b. Sometimes we say to our kids, “I can’t believe you would be so selfish – would it kill you to play with your brother.” i.e. Focused on behaviour… and expresses gulf between us and them.

c. We all know what selfishness is like – we, as grown-ups, are incredibly selfish. Yet hypocritically we only look at our children’s behaviour.

Instead…

**8. Dealing with issues of the heart**

a. The attitude of the heart is what matters most. Address the heart. And we do so in solidarity with them, one sinner to another. We face the same issues.

b. The beauty is that Christ has come to transform the heart. Not denying the problem he has with selfishness. But Christ has come to change us internally… and we know how selfish we are too.

c. When we are dealing with the heart we are naturally led to the gospel. We don’t have to figure out how to bring the Gospel in – we’ve nowhere else to go apart from to the Cross and God’s Grace.

d. Goal is to give children a way to understand themselves in light of the grace of the gospel. Deep understanding of grace… and great hope that God can transform us.

e. Every need to correct is an opportunity to talk about the Gospel… get beyond behaviour… talk about heart attitudes.

f. Not that we never correct behaviour – sometime we have to (e.g. brother hitting sister on head… or you just have to get everyone into the car). But even in those times we need to have the bigger vision – behaviour reflects a bigger problem, things that we need to speak to.

**For discussion and prayer**

1. List character development goals from these passages: Ex. 20:1-17, Matt. 5:3-10, Rom. 12:3-21, Gal 5:22-23, Col. 3:12-14, 2 Pet. 1:5-7, Lev. 19:11-18, Rom 5:3-4, 1 Cor. 13:4-8, Eph. 4:32, Phil. 2:3-4, James 3:17-19

2. The conscience is our ally in working with our children. Make notes about the conscience from the following passages of Scripture: 1 Sam. 24:1-7, Rom. 2:15, 13:1-5, 2 Cor. 4:2, 1 Pet. 3:16, 1 Tim. 4:2, Tit. 1:15

3. Note principles of godly communication from these passages in Proverbs: 10:11, 10:19-21, 10:32, 12:14, 12:18, 13:3, 15:2, 15:28, 25:11, 29:20

4. Look at the character development goals (above) and think about your children. Write down: (a) Growth area, (b) Specific Scripture to turn to, (c) Illustrations of need for this growth, (d) How you might open up the conversation.

5. Think about your children in terms of these categories:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A: RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD  Is there a conscious need for God?  Is knowing and loving God important?  Is God a source of strength and comfort?  What choices reflect knowing God?  Are God’s ways and truth important?  Do spiritual realities seem to matter?  Is there an independent relationship to God?  Does he talk about God?  How does she talk about God?  Is God grand or small?  Is God a friend or judge; helper or taskmaster?  Does she live as someone who is complete in Christ? | B: RELATIONSHIP TO HIMSELF  How does he think about himself?  Does he understand himself?  Is he aware of strengths & weaknesses?  Does he understand his personality?  Is he confident or shy and diffident?  Is he arrogant or humble?  Is he chained by fears?  Is he able to enjoy others?  Does he feel superior or inferior to others?  Is he able to work on his own?  Does he need external props to stay on task?  How much does he need the approbation of others? | C: RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS  How does he interact with others?  Can he converse without making the conversation about himself?  What does he bring out in others?  Does he control others?  Is he under other’s control?  Does he fawn for attention?  Is he pleasant with kids his age?  How does he deal with disappointment with people?  Is he forgiving?  Does he harbour bitterness toward others?  How does he respond to being sinned against?  What are his relationship strengths?  What are his relationship weaknesses? |

6. Asking questions to help our children understand their actions, responses and hearts:

Tell me about the situation

How did you responds internally when….

What did you do (or say)

What were you trying to accomplish? Did you accomplish what you wished?

How did it help ot hurt?

What would have been a better thing to do / say?

Where was God in your thinking at the time?

What could you have done to reflect the 2 great commandments (Matt 22:37-40)

7. Often our idols stop us nurturing our children properly. (e.g. “I want respect… comfort… appreciation… success… control… ease… peace). How do they get in the way? Where do I need to change?

**12. Shepherding children: Teens**

**1. Common characteristics of teenagers**

a. Insecurity – about knowledge, appearance

b. Vulnerability – trapped between childhood and adulthood

c. Instability – e.g. in their worlds of ideas… persuadable

d. Emotional instability

e. Apprehension – about knowledge, future

f. Tendency to rebel against authority – we need to be wise

**2. Common pitfalls for parents**

a. Cops and robbers

Parents always checking up on children and trying to catch them… kids are trying to get away with as much as possible. Very destructive synergism!

b. Parents Disengage

Give up on trying to influence their teenagers. Conclude they don’t want to hear from me, so give up.

c. Authoritarianism versus influence

Not authority properly exercised, but unpleasant use of authority. We want to be people of influence… with the ear and the respect of our children.

d. Reckless words

Derogatory, nasty words do great damage (reckless words wound like the sword)

e. Majoring on the minors

Focusing on matters of style and taste. (Parents, kids won’t want to look like you!)

**3. Goals with our teenagers**

a. Internalization of the gospel: passing on the baton of faith seeing them embrace the gospel as their own living faith. So…

b. Shepherding their interaction with the truth of God’s word – seeing how robust it is for all of life. We use our words much too much, and God’s Word much too little.

i. Parents need to be bringing God’s word to their kids all the time – it is objective to both of us, it is God’s Word to both of us, powerful and self-authenticating.

ii. Apply God’s truth to think through issues of culture

iii. Apply scripture to relationship struggles

c. Shepherding teenagers through the inevitable periods of doubt

i. Teenagers from a believing home *will* come to the point of wrestling with issues of faith. Do I really believe these things?

ii. Parents need to be ready for these periods. They need to know no questions are illegitimate in our home. That our faith is a reasonable faith.

Tim Keller, *Reason for God*

Doug Wilson, *Persuasion*

d. Develop a relationship that leads to mutuality as adults under God

**4. Three foundational things for interacting with teenagers**

**a. The fear of the Lord**

i. Proverbs 1:7—“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

ii. This is the first step in the path of wisdom. But the fear of God has been de-emphasized in modern evangelical culture. He is holy, transcendent, sovereign.

E.g. the message of the Prophets, which is one of judgement.

**b. Remember your parents’ words**. Proverbs 1:9-10

Pleading to listen… because we love you

Who in our culture is going to encourage children to listen to parents?

**c. Disassociation from the wicked.** It WILL happen. Wicked people will come into our children’s lives. The enticement of sinners.

i. Equip your teenagers to get out of places of danger

ii. Why will our children find wickedness attractive? Proverbs 1 helps. Wicked people present evil as something attractive, and offer acceptance.

iii. Make homes places where children are welcome and are engaged

**5. Communication**

a. Communication with your teenagers is dictated by your parenting paradigm

i. If your paradigm is *control*, you will use harsh words

ii. If the paradigm is *nurture*, your language will be different

b. Biblical communication has spiritual foundations that reflect a life of faith and

confidence in God

i. Proverbs 15:33—The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom

ii. Proverbs 9:10—The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom

iii. Proverbs 17:27—Wise people speak with restraint

1. Quiet speech. Shouting trivializes your words – it puts emotion in the foreground, and meaning in the background.

2. Avoid wordiness (see Ecclesiastes 6:11; Proverbs 17:28). Too many words make your words meaningless

3. Restraint. If you say too many words you will say things that are unguarded. Think first, speak second (see Proverbs 15:28, 29:20)

iv. Use pleasant words (Proverbs 16:20-24, 15:2—Pleasant words promote instruction)

c. Your goal is understanding

i. The finest art of communication is not the ability to express your thoughts; it is the ability to understand your kids (Session 7)

ii. Heed the warning of Proverbs 18:2—“The fool does not delight in understanding, but delights in airing his own opinions” (or Prov 18:13, the folly of answering before listening; or 20:5, heart is deep waters and we want to draw them out)

e. Communication is what enables you to have a relationship with your teenagers that makes you an influence in their lives

**For discussion and prayer**

1. Digging into the Word – three foundations for teenage years. How do the following passages speak about our teenagers?

* The Fear of the Lord – Job 28:28, Psalm 19:9, 34:11-12, 111:10, Prov 1:7, 9:10, 10:27, 14:27, 15:33, 16:6, 19:23, 22:4, Eccles 8:13, 12:13, Isa 33:6
* Listening to parents – Prov 1:8-9 etc.
* Disassociating from the wicked – Ps 1:1-6, 9:16, 10:4, 11:5-6, 32:10, 37, 55:23, 141:4, 145:20, 147:6, Prov 1:10, 3:33, 4:14, 4:19, 5:22, 10:6, 10:24-30, 11:21, 11:23, 12:5-7, 14:32, 15:3, 15:8-9, 21:19, 22:5, 24:1, 24:19-20, 25:26, 28:4, 29:7, 29:16, 29:27

2. Look at Galatians 6:1-2 which is a helpful paradigm for engaging our teens constructively. How should we understand these key words? How will they help us relate?

* “caught” in sin:
* “restore”:
* “gently”:
* “watch”:
* “carry”:

3. What are some things you can do to engage in solid Bible study with your teen so that he can see the wisdom and vitality of the Word of God?

4. If the attraction of association with wicked teens is belonging and camaraderie, what can you do to insure your home is a place to belong?

5. What are some fun things and activities you can do with your teen to insure that every contact with your teen is not just business? What can you look forward to doing together?

6. Every parent of a teen has been in conversations in which he has become emotional and upset. What are some ways you and your spouse can signal to each other and encourage each other to disengage temporarily when things are heating up?

7. Critique your style of parenting your teen to discern ways that you respond that are not helpful and never bear good fruit. Ask your spouse for constructive help.