

GOODLY

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**GOODLY
PARENT**

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How To Raise Not Just Good
But Godly Kids Through
Heart-Driven Grace-Based
Parenting

SMALL GROUP WORKBOOK

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This workbook is designed to be used in a small group setting in conjunction with the book, *Godly Parenting In An Ungodly World*.

A book for each small group participant can be purchased on Amazon...
<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0BX7J7HT6>

Bulk orders can be placed at a discounted rate by reaching out to andrew@godlyparent.com.

This is a free resource.

Permission is granted to make as many copies as needed for your small group.
Download print files of this resource can be found at [GodlyParent.com/resources](https://www.godlyparent.com/resources).

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To Small Group Leaders specifically:

This 30-page workbook serves as both a leader guide and participant guide.

It is designed to equip you with the tools needed to connect with your small group participants in a meaningful and effective way. It is also designed with flexibility to help you facilitate healthy conversation that goes in the direction most helpful for the parents in attendance.

Don't feel pressured to get all the content in with each session. Meet the parents where they are with each topic. And allow the conversation to stay fluid so long as it stays on track of genuinely benefiting parents.

Your goal is simply to lead a discussion that helps parents succeed in their current parenting situations, while at the same time shaping and shifting their parenting mindset toward a godly and biblical perspective.

Have your own highlights from each chapter and section to help direct the conversation. The more you can share personal stories and examples of how these principles have been (or have failed to be) used in your own life and parenting, the better.

Be real. Be transparent. Be vulnerable. And it's more likely that the people in your group will be as well.

Don't forget to utilize the additional free resources at [GodlyParent.com/resources](https://www.godlyparent.com/resources). There are many supporting articles and tools for each chapter that will help parents dive deeper into each session's topic.

If you need anything or have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out. Praying for you as you start this journey of helping dads and moms become the godly parents their kids deserve!

Andrew



Godly Parenting | Session #1

Godly Parents Raise Godly Children

Prep: Read Introduction & Chapter 1

Group Kick-Off (start with any or all of these as desired)

Break the Ice:

- What is something your family enjoys doing that is somewhat unique to you? (travel, sports, food, recreation, hobbies, traditions, etc.)
- What is one takeaway that you highlighted or that stood out to you in this chapter?

Key Verse:

My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. Proverbs 23:26

BIG IDEA:

The key to GODLY PARENTing is very simply this: a godly parent.

Identifying your goal:

If you're looking to get your car fixed, you're going to find a good mechanic. But if you're having health issues, you're probably going to go to your doctor, not your mechanic. Why? Your choice is a reflection of your goal. If your goal is to raise godly children, it starts by choosing personal godliness yourself. Because you will rarely ever lead your children beyond your own level of spirituality. A parent's consistent, godly life could possibly be the most powerful and compelling reason for why their children choose to follow faith more than anything else. Because more than your children will become what you say, they will become who you are.

What does a godly parent look like?

Discuss these qualities of a godly parent from the book's introduction and what you think each should look like practically:

- A godly parent is a growing parent.
- A godly parent is a grace-based parent.
- A godly parent is a God-like parent.

Of these three, which one is the greatest struggle for you personally and why?

In the introduction, we discuss some of the differences between traditional Christian parenting (rules-based) and true Christian parenting (relationship-based).

- If you were raised in a Christian home, which type of parenting were you raised under?
- How do you feel this affected you *then* and how has it shaped your own parenting *now*?

Read Deuteronomy 6:5-7

- God commanded the Israelite parents to take what was already in their hearts and transfer it to their children's hearts and lives. In other words, God wanted change to start in the parents first, before he expected change in the children. More often than not, kids don't change unless parents do.

On page 2 of the book, it discusses Andrew & Charity's parenting epiphany:

"Like most new parents, in the beginning, we thought our goal was raising the right kid. But come to find out, godly parenting is actually the opposite—it's more about being the right parent. Most parents naturally think "My kids really need...XYZ", or "If my kids would just change, things would be different." But the reality is that good parenting is not so much about the kids; it's about the parents. We humorously, yet mistakenly, think that if our kids would just behave, we could be good parents. This is getting the cart before the horse. *The success of godly parenting is not about your kids. It's about you.*"

"The difficult reality is that many Christian parents want godly children without the pain of discipline. These are the parents who want to change their children, but they don't want to think about having to change themselves."

Growth = Sanctification

A godly parent is a growing parent because God is always trying to sanctify you through your parenting.

- *"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification."* I Thessalonians 4:3
- *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son."* Romans 8:29

I remember an elderly man in our church years ago who carved a detailed little boot out of a piece of wood. When asked, "How in the world did you know how to make that?" He replied, "Oh, it's easy. I just chip away anything and everything that doesn't... look like a boot." This is what God is doing with us through the sanctifying process of our parenting... chipping away at anything and everything that doesn't look like Jesus in our lives.

- What are some practical ways God uses parenting to sanctify us and make us more like Jesus?
- Read the Tripp quote on page 7. How does parenting sometimes bring out the worst in us by causing us to have to face our own selves and shortcomings in the mirror that need attention?

Discuss this quote from page 7...

"Growth is a sanctifying process. We are always becoming more like Christ as we grow in grace and renew our minds through truth. This requires regular change. Godly parents are always growing and changing into more of who God wants them to be both as parents and as people. This process of sanctifying change

inevitably spills over onto our children. As we grow closer to Christ, we naturally lead them to do the same.”

Addressing the Invisible Suitcase

A huge part of allowing God to sanctify you through your parenting is addressing your “invisible suitcase” — all the stuff that you brought into your marriage and parenting from your own story of how you were raised, whether good or bad.

“You cannot escape your own story. The parent you are today is due much in part to your story. Your parenting style, habits, and tendencies have all become a part of you based upon your own upbringing, childhood experiences, and parental influences. If we only operate by default, we will become our parents to our own children. Let that sink in.”

- How has the way you were parented affected your own parenting currently, for either good or bad?
- Why is prioritizing your own marriage (as a part of your child’s future story) so important to the success of your parenting?

If you haven’t already, take time to do the self-evaluation on page 12 and 13 of the book before proceeding.

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Like all parents, yours most likely fell into one of three categories of parenting styles, and chances are that you will too. Here are the three categories:

- Authoritarian: over-parenting (“I’m the parent, so that settles it.”)
- Permissive: under-parenting (“I just want my kids to be happy.”)
- Authoritative: balanced and biblical parenting (“I am called to steward these lives well.”)

Identify which parenting style you were raised under.
Now identify which parenting style you naturally lean towards.

Discuss this statement: The success of godly parenting is more about you than it is about your kids (The key to godly parenting is a godly parent).

As time allows, finish by discussing any “Heart of the Matter” questions on page 14.

EXTRA NOTES:



Godly Parenting | Session #2

Parenting Seasons & Parenting Success

Prep: Read Chapter 2

Group Kick-Off (start with any or all of these)

Break the Ice:

- Share a personal parenting highlight from the past week either positive or negative, funny or serious.
- What is one takeaway that you highlighted or that stood out to you in this chapter?

Set the Stage (Review from Session #1):

The success of godly parenting is more about me than it is about my kids. I am God's agent of change in the hearts and lives of my children. Godly parents raise godly kids.

Key Verse:

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

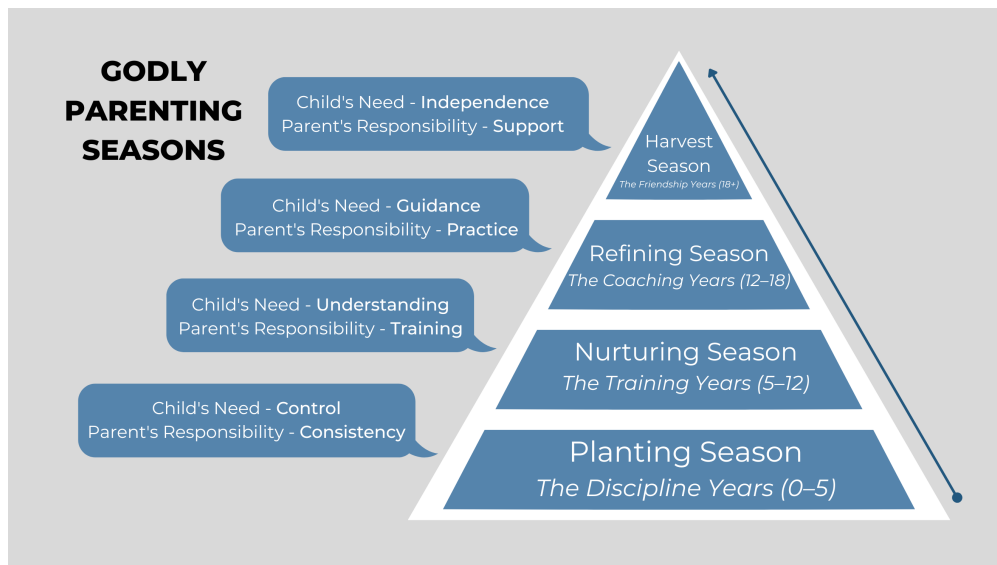
BIG IDEA:

You have been given four seasons in parenting, and each season builds a proper foundation for the next.

Identifying your goal:

You may have heard new grandparents say something like this, "If I only knew how much fun grandparenting was, I'd have chosen to do that first!" Of course that's humorous, but only because it's impossible. If you were given the choice between building a house's foundation or its structure first, which would you choose? Well, the choice would be obvious, because the goal is not just a pretty structure in the moment, but a sound and solid one that endures the test of time. Doing the right things in the right order is crucial for longterm success (Matthew 7:24-27). The same principle is true in parenting. Prioritizing the right things in the right seasons will set you up for greater longterm success and less longterm regret.

Discuss observations about the pyramid below and identify which season(s) you are currently going through in your own parenting. (You can access the full image at GodlyParent.com/resources.)



God has given you four seasons of parenting with your children, and the fourth season is the “when he is old” season. That means you have been given three seasons in which you’ll intentionally guide your child “in the way he should go.”

The first season is primarily *foundational*. Get the first season right, and it makes the next season easier, and so on. However, get the first seasons wrong, and it makes it more difficult to get the next season right as you’re trying to play catchup from the previous season(s).

- How have you seen this exemplified either positively or negatively in your own life or others?

The second season is primarily *educational*. You are preparing your child’s heart and mind for life through a proper understanding of authority, truth, and right and wrong.

The third season is primarily *practical*. This is a heavily conversational season where you as a coach are giving and guiding your child through opportunities to live out their training in everyday life.

The fourth season is primarily *relational*. This season is when you get to enjoy the fruit of your labor—the harvest.

Discuss the farming analogy on page 210-211. A good farmer does what only he can do to produce a good harvest. But a good farmer also knows that there are many things completely out of his control that he must trust God for.

- What are some things as parents that we CAN do to ensure a good harvest?
- What are some things as parents that we CANNOT do, but must trust God for concerning the harvest?

Proverbs 22:6 does not guarantee that our kids will never stray from the truth. However, we can align ourselves and our parenting with God’s proven laws of sowing and reaping as found in Galatians 6:7&9. Remember that being a godly parent is not a guarantee that you will raise a godly child. However, it is still your best and most biblical option.

Discuss the four seasons of parenting and their corresponding verses:

PLANTING SEASON—THE DISCIPLINE YEARS (0-5)

(Child's greatest need—control. Parent's greatest responsibility—Consistency)

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

- How can a parent's belief that “my kids are naturally good at heart” work against them in their parenting efforts?
- What is the only command ever given in Scripture directly to children? (Eph. 6:1, Col. 3:20)
- Is it okay for parents to force (enforce: root word, force) their children to obey? (Hint: if obedience is the one thing commanded for children, should it not also be the one thing enforced by parents?)
- During this first season of establishing control, should parents argue or reason with children to get them to obey, or simply require obedience? Why or why not?

Discuss how control (the child's primary need) and consistency (the parent's primary responsibility) are both necessary for success in this season.

NURTURING SEASON—THE TRAINING YEARS (5-12)

(Child's greatest need—Understanding. Parent's greatest responsibility—Training)

Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4

- If George Barna is correct and a child's worldview is established by the age of 13 (page 28 in book), how should that shape our priorities as a parent in the nurturing season?

Discuss this quote from page 29 in the book: *“While parents should establish control in the discipline season, where we most often capture or lose a child's heart is in the nurturing season. And the most difficult part of it all is that most parents won't always know until the next two seasons which it is. Often, children can be outwardly compliant while their hearts are very far from their parents and from the truth.”*

- What are some ways that parents can intentionally cultivate the soil of their child's heart in this season to increase their chances at winning their child's heart rather than losing it?
- Nurturing takes time, patience, and priority. What are some things that parents can sacrifice (put on hold) in the first two seasons to give their children greater priority of their time and attention?

REFINING SEASON—THE COACHING YEARS (12-18)

(Child's greatest need—Guidance. Parent's greatest responsibility—Practice)

Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul. Proverbs 29:17

- Discuss the “letting go of the bike” illustration on page 31. What are some of the similarities or practical ways of allowing your child to learn to “ride on their own” during this season?
- Good coaching requires both training and practice. The nurturing season has been more of the training. The refining season needs to be more of the practice. How can we help our children to not just know truth, but to own it and live it out for themselves?
- The two primary keys that Andrew’s family found for success in this season were questions and conversations, which naturally go hand in hand. Which of these two do you find more difficult and why?

HARVEST SEASON – THE FRIENDSHIP YEARS (18+)

(Child’s greatest need – Independence. Parent’s greatest responsibility – Support)

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

Discuss this statement from page 33: *“Be your child’s parent now so you can be your child’s friend forever. If you’ll be your child’s parent and do the hard things in the first three seasons, you’ll get to enjoy the harvest of their friendship for years to come. Many parents miss this or completely misunderstand it, and it costs them in the long run.”*

- You are given just 18 years to parent your child, but a lifetime to be friends if you do things right. In this season, what are some practical ways to primarily focus on protecting your relationship above all else?
- What are some of the consequences of a parent still trying to parent their grown child rather than focusing on supporting and protecting their relationship?

Like in farming, the universal laws of sowing and reaping are proven to work in parenting as well if parents will align themselves with them.

Which “Helpful How-to Heart Hack” on pages 37-38 is the best practical takeaway for you from this chapter?

As time allows, finish by discussing any “Heart of the Matter” questions on page 39.

EXTRA NOTES:



Godly Parenting | Session #3

Who's in Control?

Prep: Read Chapter 3

Group Kick-Off (start with any or all of these)

Break the Ice:

- If you could control the weather OR what other people think, which would you choose and why?
- What is one takeaway that you highlighted or that stood out to you in this chapter?

Set the Stage (Review from Session #2):

Doing the right things in the right seasons aligns you with God's proven plan of sowing and reaping for parenting success.

Key Verse:

He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. -Proverbs 13:24

BIG IDEA:

The question is not whether or not control will be established. The question is once it is established, *who* has it?

Identifying your goal:

A child changes your life forever! No parent will deny that. But when a child enters the picture, a parent has a choice as to the lens through which they see their relationship with this child. Many parents adopt the flawed "make my child happy at all costs" mindset. Their ultimate goal becomes the happiness of their child, which leads them to seeking to please their child in every way and protecting them from the painful consequences and realities of life. This parenting approach rarely ever ends well. However, a godly parent sees parenting through a totally different lens. They do not see themselves as an agent of fulfilling their child's happiness, even though their child brings so much happiness to their life. They see their parenting as the stewardship of a life and its eternal direction. Their goal is not protection from the realities of life, but preparation for those realities through a lifelong relationship with Jesus. This starts in the first foundational season of parenting by establishing control.

"If we do nothing intentional, we're going to release narcissistic, entitled individuals who think the world revolves around them. We need to create in our children an others-centered view of life." -Bryan Loritts

The Fight for Control

In the chapter, Andrew shares a story of their fight for control with one of their children. Share a similar story of your own, funny or serious, where you were faced with the battle for control.

“Do it right in those first few years, and you’ll have just made the next 13 years so much easier, having laid a strong foundation to build upon. Never underestimate the power of this. Sadly, many parents do just that by justifying their young child’s actions or misbehavior in these young years only to have to deal with the difficult consequences for years to come. Training up your children right in the younger years will set you up for parenting success in the older years. When parents neglect their responsibilities in those first few years, it’s not impossible to succeed, but it is a lot harder. They’ll have to play “catch-up,” possibly for years, and try to establish control in seasons not meant for that.” (pages 46-47)

- Why is establishing control early so very important for the success of your parenting?
- The book refers to the first season (specifically ages 2-5) as “the hardest years of parenting.” Would you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?
- Regardless of your child’s age, what is the #1 key to establishing control? (See the end of page 49 and page 56)... Why do you think this is also one of the most difficult aspects of parenting?
- In regards to consistency, these three things are essential for establishing control. Discuss practically what these three things could or should look like in a family:
 - Consistent boundaries and expectations
 - Consistent consequences for when those boundaries are crossed
 - Consistent follow-through of what accountability will look like
- Have you ever discussed or clarified in writing what these three areas look like in your home? (You can complete this exercise on page 50 of the book.)
- The top of page 54 says, “Toddlers have no authority over parents unless parents give it to them. Don’t give it to them.” Andrew uses the illustration of making a child wear a coat. What are some other practical examples of not giving a toddler authority?

Two Needs of Every Child

There are two things every child needs: consistent boundaries (rules) and unconditional love (relationship).

- Which of these comes more natural for you as a parent?
 - rules-based or relationship-based?
 - enforcer or encourager?
 - too much truth (too harsh) or too much grace (too lenient)?
- Read John 1:14. Why is a proper balance of truth and grace so very important, and what can be some of the consequences of not properly balancing these two? Who is our perfect example of this?

“If you’re not okay with your kid being angry at you, you’re not going to be a good parent.” -Bill Allison

Discuss this common phrase: “If parents are too strict, their kids will rebel!”

- Is this necessarily, or always, true? Are too many rules the problem, or is this often the result of an imbalance of rules and relationship?

Discuss this statement, “Telling your children what you expect of them, and then consistently enforcing those expectations, does not make you the bad guy. It simply means you’re guilty of good and godly parenting.”

- What are some common ways our culture tries to shame parents for good parenting?
- How can practicing the parenting mindset of “more control now, less control later” (page 56) set you up for future parenting success?
- How do many parents often inadvertently have the opposite mindset (less control now, more control later), and what can be the negative results?

Which “Helpful How-to Heart Hack” on pages 59-60 can be one of the best practical takeaway for you from this chapter?

As time allows, finish by discussing any “Heart of the Matter” questions on page 60.

EXTRA NOTES:



Godly Parenting | Session #4

How to Discipline Properly & Biblically

Prep: Read Chapter 4

Group Kick-Off (start with any or all of these)

Break the Ice:

- Share a funny story or lesson learned for you or one of your kids through a time of discipline.
- What is one takeaway that you highlighted or that stood out to you in this chapter?

Set the Stage: (Review from Session #3):

Establishing control early is like laying a firm foundation to build upon for years to come. It's always easier to get the foundation right from the start than it is to try patching it up for years to come. As one person said, "It's a whole lot easier to build strong boys than it is to repair broken men."

Key Verse:

Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul. -Proverbs 29:17

BIG IDEA:

Discipline is the unmistakable tool that God has given parents to establish control. Consistency is the key.

Identifying your goal:

If we're being honest, we don't naturally like things that are difficult or painful, yet it's through pain that some of life's greatest gifts come from. The pain of exercise produces the result of a healthier and longer life. The pain of financial restraint produces the gift of financial freedom rather than bondage. The pain of life's trials often produces the sweetness of God's presence in new ways. In all areas of life, including parenting, the immediate pain of discipline helps us avoid the longterm pain of regret. While we'd like to help our children avoid pain as much as possible, godly parents understand that temporary pain now will prevent greater pain later. And according to Proverbs 3:12 & 13:24, disciplining your child is one of the most loving and godly things you can do for them as a parent.

To Discipline or Not to Discipline (That is the question)

The excuses for why many parents don't discipline their children are many. Which of the excuses on pages 63-64 have you personally seen, or hit home personally, for you the most?

The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. -Proverbs 29:15

Small Group Study

Discuss the two forms of discipline mentioned in the Scripture and what practical discipline measures could be included under each:

- Physical discipline: the rod (page 65)
- Corrective discipline: reproof (page 66)
- Physical discipline (spanking) is a hot button topic in our culture and even within the church today. What are your thoughts about it's appropriateness? (Scriptures to help: Proverbs 13:24, 19:18, 22:15, 23:13-14, 29:15, 29:17)
 - Read Proverbs 13:24. According to this verse, is it possible to love *and* discipline your child at the same time? Is it possible not to?
 - If there are two forms of discipline clearly mentioned in Scripture, how can parents find the right balance to take advantage of both without neglecting either? How do parents sometimes fail at this?
- What form of discipline did your parents primarily use?
- Do you feel your parents handled discipline in a balanced and biblical way or not? How has that affected your own views of discipline as a parent either positively or negatively?

Two traps to avoid:

- Reverting by default to what your own parents did regardless of whether right or wrong.
- Going to the opposite extreme of whatever your parents did.
- Which of these two traps might you be tempted to lean towards the most?

What Balanced & Biblical Discipline Looks Like

Balanced and biblical discipline in your home requires that you reject passivity and embrace intentionality.

Discuss the four C's of balanced and biblical discipline (Calm, Consistent, Controlled, Compassionate, pages 66-71).

- Which of these four do you personally find the most difficult and why?
- What are some of the dangers of disciplining out of anger?
- What are some of the benefits of consistency in parenting? Why do you think consistency is so hard?

Punishment: repaying an offender for his wrongs.

Discipline: enforcing consequences for wrong actions with the intent of helping and training the offender.

- Which of these two best describes what discipline looks like in your home?
- How does compassion in our discipline reflect to our kids how the Heavenly Father deals with us as his children? (Refer to page 79 for additional scripture and discussion on how to imitate the Father in discipline.)

Discuss the 3-step follow-up plan starting on the bottom of page 71.

- What are some of the negative results of discipline not balanced with love?

“Discipline balanced with love leads to respect, but discipline without love leads to rebellion.”

- How can following these three simple steps help win your child’s heart rather than lose it through times of discipline?
- Should our children feel shame and ongoing judgment, or peace and reassurance of our unconditional love following times of discipline?
- What is one of the primary goals of discipline according to Proverbs 23:13-14?

As time allows, discuss these thoughts:

One of the best ways to give your children a proper perspective of who God is is by holding them accountable for their actions and misbehavior. If kids grow up with parents who can be persuaded and manipulated out of ever enforcing their rules through discipline, those same kids will grow up without a real belief in having to be held accountable before God someday.

Kids who lack respect for authority will naturally lack respect for the ultimate authority of God, and consequently, will have more difficulty recognizing the wickedness of their own sinful heart and their need for personal salvation. One of the greatest avenues that parents have for revealing their child’s sinful condition to them is during times of discipline. Consistent consequences and regularly showing them how their sin is truly against God opens their hearts for grace. And the ultimate end is found in “delivering their soul from hell.”

Simply put... *“Children who are biblically disciplined by loving parents are many steps ahead towards receiving God’s grace through salvation.”*

- Do you agree, disagree, or have questions? Discuss

Which “Helpful How-to Heart Hack” on pages 83-84 is the best practical takeaway for you from this chapter?

As time allows, finish by discussing any “Heart of the Matter” questions on page 84.

EXTRA NOTES:



Godly Parenting | Session #5

Character—Heart Preparation for Christlikeness

Prep: Read Chapter 5

Group Kick-Off (start with any or all of these)

Break the Ice:

- If you had the character traits of a cartoon character, who would you be and why? Or... Which cartoon character best fits the personalities of your children?
- What is one takeaway that you highlighted or that stood out to you in this chapter?

Set the Stage: (Review from Session #4):

Balanced and biblical discipline will give you a sure foundation of love and respect to build upon for years to come. By establishing control and discipline early, your child will better understand that you are for them and not against them, and will prepare them for God's ultimate authority in their lives.

Key Verse:

My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother... For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is a light; and the reproofs of instruction are the way of life. -Proverbs 29:17

BIG IDEA:

We instill character into our children's hearts and lives in ways that we can, trusting God's Spirit to clothe our children in the character of Christ in ways that we can't.

Identifying your goal:

What is the goal of having children of character? Is it to make us look good as parents? To prevent embarrassment in front of others? To produce moral, good citizens of earth? Unfortunately, all of those things are temporal at best. However, instilling godly character into our children is a way to tap into their hearts for a lifetime and beyond. Deep-rooted character in the heart outlasts your words and even your presence as a parent. Such character is what produces Daniels and Esthers who can withstand moral decay all around them, standing up to defend truth in the midst of compromise. True character can solve a host of problems in our children's lives as they get older. And many of the world's problems can be credited to a lack of it. The old saying that "people rarely change" is often true for both the good and the bad. Character is a worthy goal, because once cemented within the heart, it's hard to lose for a lifetime.

How to Develop Godly Character

Discuss the two voices mentioned that God has given your child to help develop character:

- Their God-given conscience

Small Group Study

- God's Holy Spirit at work in them
- How are these two things uniquely different?
- Why are both of these things important?

Discuss the differences between training and correction from pages 96-97. Both are necessary, but an imbalance of the two can lead to negative results in your parenting. Too much correcting and not enough intentional training will lead to frustration.

Discuss this quote: *“Correction has more to do with behavior. Training has more to do with character.”*

- Which one addresses more of the head?
- Which one addresses more of the heart?

Discuss the concepts of “Forward Thinking Parenting” and “Positive Parenting” from pages 98-100.

- Which one is a greater struggle for you personally?
- Which one stands out to you as the greater need in your own parenting to be successful at instilling character in your kids?

Protect Their Appetites, Protect Their Heart

Read Proverbs 25:16, Proverbs 29:15 & Proverbs 4:23.

One of the greatest parenting lies of our generation is that we need to be much more permissive with our children than in previous generations. However, greater permissiveness most often leads to greater passivity, which is not what we should want for our children.

If we know how hard it is to keep our own appetites in check as an adult, how much more are we responsible as parents to help our children protect their own hearts by stewarding their appetites?

- What are some key appetites or areas of accountability that parents need to give attention to in order to protect their child's hearts?
- Think of some children of character that you know personally. Do they come from overly permissive homes or homes with a sense of structure and accountability?
- Looking back on your own childhood, did your parents do a good job of protecting your heart through protecting your appetites? What could you learn from this, either good or bad, for your own parenting?

Be a Leaky Faucet

“Through the seasons of parenthood, you are filling your child's character bucket. And it's very easy to get discouraged when you don't see the impact your efforts are making. But it's not because your efforts are not making an impact. Your efforts are drops in the bucket, and they'll pay off in filling your child's character over time through consistency.

Most parents want to pour themselves out into their children. Wise and godly parents do it one drop at a time.” (from page 110)

“More than your kids will become what you say, they will become who you are.”

Christlike character is as much caught as it is taught. Come up with at least five ways to be a leaky faucet in your child’s heart and life on a regular basis:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

- Why is inconsistent consistency better than no consistency at all?

Discuss how this quote from page 112 either encourages you or makes you think?

“Don’t forget this—if you’re striving to honor God in your parenting, you can’t ruin your kids. As a Christian parent, just as nothing you can do has the power to save your children, nothing you can do has the power to ruin your children. Your job is to provide a firm foundation. Their job is to choose to build upon it.

God’s grace is always greater than your failures in parenting. 2 Timothy 2:13 reminds us that even when we are faithless, God is still faithful. God’s grace is always on your side in both your best and worst moments as a parent.”

How can we specifically channel all of our efforts at building our children’s character into lifelong Christlikeness rather than just moral goodness?

Which “Helpful How-to Heart Hack” on pages 113-114 is the best practical takeaway for you from this chapter?

As time allows, finish by discussing any “Heart of the Matter” questions on page 114.

EXTRA NOTES:



Godly Parenting | Session #6

Worldview—Mental Preparation for Spiritual Warfare

Prep: Read Chapter 6

Group Kick-Off (start with any or all of these)

Break the Ice:

- Share one of the craziest superstitions or sincere beliefs you've ever heard of someone believing?
- What is one takeaway that you highlighted or that stood out to you in this chapter?

Set the Stage: (Review from Session #5):

Christlike character is as much *caught* as it is *taught*. While correction can be helpful, it is not the primary tool for developing character in our children. Your child's character is foundational to their worldview.

Key Verses:

We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done... That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children. That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments. -Psalm 78:4-7

BIG IDEA:

The war for the heart is most often won or lost on the battlefield of the mind. Establishing a biblical worldview in our children is about protecting their heart through shaping their mind.

Identifying your goal:

Like two sides of the same coin, character and worldview go hand in hand in many ways. They are both happening primarily in the middle two seasons of your parenting. Yet worldview is usually following character's lead like a younger sibling trailing closely behind in his older brother's shadow. Developing godly character at a young age helps prepare the soil of the heart in order for a biblical worldview to take deep root. Yet how often do we see young people with good hearts succumbing to the world's arguments and questions against God and his word? Sadly, far more often than we'd like to admit. In a variety of ways, our enemy most often engages war against the hearts of our children through the battlefield of their minds. *We must intentionally get there first.* As parents, we must capitalize on the home-court advantage we've been given.

Spiritual Warfare and Our Children

According to research done by George Barna, before age 13, kids are *defining* what they believe. After age 13, they start *defending* those beliefs.

- How should this truth affect our parenting?

“There is a war on children, and we are all, in one way or another, playing some role in it... we are wrestling demons—because there is little the demons hate more than little children.” -Johnathan Parnell

- What are some ways you see this war taking place in our culture and society for our kids' impressionable minds?
- What are some ways that your family has found successful to combat against these influences?

Culture and the Family

Culture is the environment we live in and think is normal, whatever that may be. This is why our family culture (whatever's normal) through our day to day lives has so much more impact than our words.

“Your children will always learn more from what you model than from what you mandate.”

Discuss the four primary levels of culture (mentioned on pages 125-130) that impact a child's worldview.

- The culture of their family (influences within the home)
 - The culture of their circle (influences within their circle of friends, sport's teams/coaches, church small groups/leaders, etc.)
 - The culture of their society (influences outside of their home and circle—media, music, politics, etc.)
 - The culture of their “fourth world” (their private digital life)
- Which of these four do you see having the most pull on your child's thinking and worldview?

Discipleship In the Home

Read these verses: Proverbs 13:20, I Corinthians 15:33, Proverbs 27:17, Hebrews 10:24

Someone is going to disciple your child. The question is whether or not it will be you. Your child's worldview will be shaped by something or someone. You can choose to shape it yourself, or you can choose to leave it to chance.

The chapter lists three important parts of a family's life that are already creating disciples of our children:

- Their schedule
- Their schooling
- Their sports

- Why do you think that these three areas specifically matter so much?
- Do you find that any of these three things are helping or hurting your discipleship efforts?

Conversations are the vehicles of disciple making. Questions are the necessary fuel that drives them.

- How well are you doing at using questions and conversations to make disciples?
- Do you allow your children space to question you and your family’s values and beliefs?
- Do your children feel comfortable or hesitant to talk to you about anything going on in their hearts and lives?
- Do you have an open-door questions policy (any question, anytime, about anything) in your home? If not, would you consider establishing one?

“If your kids don’t ever have any questions about their faith, it’s quite possible they won’t have any depth about it either. A faith that can’t be tested can’t be trusted.”

I recently heard someone share this challenging thought, “Doubts and questions don’t mean the end of faith, but often a gateway to greater faith.” Would you agree, disagree?

As the clash of spiritual kingdoms intensifies (page 142), how could you better prepare your children as soldiers to face the ever-increasing battles in our culture over truth? And how can we help them do it with grace while keeping the Gospel in it’s proper place at the center?

Which “Helpful How-to Heart Hack” on pages 148-149 is the best practical takeaway for you from this chapter?

As time allows, finish by discussing any “Heart of the Matter” questions on page 149-150.

EXTRA NOTES:



Godly Parenting | Session #7

Talking About the Tough Stuff

Prep: Read Chapter 7

Group Kick-Off (start with any or all of these)

Break the Ice:

- (If you're comfortable sharing) How old were you when you first got "the talk"? Or did your parents have it with you at all?
- What is one takeaway that you highlighted or that stood out to you in this chapter?

Set the Stage: (Review from Session #6):

A child's worldview will often be reflected in direct proportion to a parent's efforts at intentional discipleship. The question is not whether or not your children will become disciples. The question is whether or not they will be disciplined by *you*.

Key Verse:

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! -Isaiah 5:20

BIG IDEA:

If we fail to talk to our kids about the tough stuff, someone else certainly will. Children don't have a choice about becoming a disciple. But they do have a choice about *whose* disciple they will become. Because of this, parents should not be ashamed to discuss what God was not ashamed to create.

Identifying your goal:

Is your family sex-positive or sex-negative? Many of us may have grown up in a sex-negative environment where the topic of sex or anything remotely surrounding it was taboo. And when it was mentioned, it always seemed to be in the negative. As Christian parents, we have the opportunity to change that for our kids. Never before has the world around us thrust sexuality and all its perverted forms in front of our children like it's trying to today. And never before has it been as important for Christian families to have regular and ongoing discussions about God's view of all things sex through a positive, biblical lens. Our children need to be raised in a sex-positive home where sex and our individual sexuality is treated as the good and godly gift that it is—a gift with perfect timing and purpose when used according to God's plan.

Silence Is Not Always Golden

A question that parents must answer is this, should we be silent when our kids want answers?

Most parents don't talk to their children about the hard or uncomfortable things. In fact, even most Christian parents don't. And if they do, it's often a one-and-done conversation, or too-little-too-late.

- Why do you think this is? For what reasons do most parents avoid talking to their kids about the tough stuff?

According to a recent Axis poll, 56% of Christian parents don't talk to their teens because they simply don't know what to say... and so they often say nothing at all. This can be out of fear of rejection because they don't think their teen will be receptive, among other reasons.

- Are there additional tough topics, other than sex, in your family (or in your own home growing up) that seem to be taboo?

Discuss this quote from page 156:

"How difficult do we make it for our children when God has wired them to think about their own sexuality, and we refuse to allow them a safe place to talk about it?"

No parent wants to make it harder for their kids when it comes to understanding their sexuality, yet that's exactly what silence accomplishes. Never before has our competition for our kids' hearts and minds been so boldly vocal, so easily accessible, and so conveniently digital. By forfeiting home court advantage in the early years, many parents not only make their own job harder, but put their children at a disadvantage for years to come. Why? Because they've already heard it, seen it, and oftentimes believed it from another perspective than yours.

Can you share any ways you have successfully navigated the tough topics with your kids?

A Golden Opportunity

Nothing has helped break down barriers and create conversations in our own home more than our **open-door questions policy** (any question, anytime, about anything).

- How could an open-door questions policy in your home create the culture you want surrounding the tough topics?
- If our children aren't asking us the tough questions, where are they likely to find the answers?

Preparing your kids for a lifetime of purity starts with breaking the silence and having that first of many conversations. Is it going to be uncomfortable? Yes. Will there be moments of awkward silence? Probably. Is it going to be worth it? Absolutely.

“Children need to hear about current issues from a grace-filled biblical standpoint, and the best source is not the church or the schools—it’s the parents.”

In addition to the many tough topics listed in the chapter like sexuality, pornography, and gender identity, the culture continues to throw more and more opportunities our way to have conversations about emerging and challenging issues. Don’t worry about not having all the answers. Just be real.

- What are some of the current events or moral issues facing your own town, our nation, or the world right now that could give you some great conversations starters as a family about your beliefs and values?

Sadly, many Christians have at times made enemies out of those with whom they disagree on moral or spiritual issues. They have looked at them through a lens of hate rather than love. And the example set for the next generation has often inadvertently been one of truth *without* grace.

- How can we intentionally help our children love people the way Jesus does (with truth *and* grace) without villainizing those we disagree with?

Which “Helpful How-to Heart Hack” on pages 165-166 is the best practical takeaway for you from this chapter?

As time allows, finish by discussing any of “Heart of the Matter” questions on page 166.

EXTRA NOTES:



Godly Parenting | Session #8

Making Your Child's Heart Your Goal

Prep: Read Chapter 8

Group Kick-Off (start with any or all of these)

Break the Ice:

- Share a moment in time you remember when one of your parents truly connected with your heart?
- What is one takeaway that you highlighted or that stood out to you in this chapter?

Set the Stage: (Review from Session #7):

Words left unsaid and conversations never had can be damaging to a parent-child relationship. Silence is not always golden. But openness, transparency, and a level of vulnerability can go a long way. Because kids would rather have a parent who's always real than one who's always right.

Key Verse:

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. -2 Peter 3:18

BIG IDEA:

The ultimate goal of our parenting is to shape and direct the heart of our child, preparing them for God's grace, both now and for a lifetime.

Identifying your goal:

If the goal of godly parenting is just to raise well-behaved children, then focusing on the rules is enough. If the goal of godly parenting is just to raise good, moral, and relational humans, then focusing on relationships is enough. But if the goal of godly parenting is to reach the heart, not just the head... and if the goal is to balance both rules and relationship... and if the goal is to ultimately help our kids become more like Jesus... this requires both truth *and* grace, rules *and* relationship, and capturing the heart *and* the head. As grace-based, heart-driven parents, it is important for us to clarify our purpose—we are not striving to raise rule-followers, but Christ-followers. This can only happen in the heart.

“You can force your kids to follow your rules, but you can't force your kids to follow your faith.”

Things That Are Different Are Not the Same

Read Ephesians 6:4, Proverbs 23:26, and John 1:14

- In your own words, how is grace-based parenting (relationship based) different than traditional Christian parenting (rules based)?

Discuss what these differences can practically look like in a home:

- Raising good kids vs. godly kids
- Reaching a child's heart vs. their head
- Emphasis on rules vs. emphasis on relationship
- Compliant attitudes vs. transformed hearts

How is a proper balance between rules and relationship, or truth and grace, so key to reaching your child's heart?

We Are Shepherds Not Creators

According to Proverbs 22:6, God has already created our child with "a way." They have already been given naturally bends and strengths by their Creator that are not for us to choose. However, we are commanded to be intentional with training (shepherding) their heart in the way it should go.

About 20 years ago, doctors noticed a worrying trend: more and more parents obsessing over their kids' athletic careers. Statistically, 26% of U.S. parents whose children play sports in high school hope their child will make it to the pros someday. And among families with incomes under \$50k annually, that number rises to 39%.

- What are some ways parents often try to take on the role of creator rather than shepherd?
- What problems can this cause when parents fail to train and shape their child's God-given heart/way?
- What are some benefits for your child when you focus on their heart and God-given bends rather than just your own desires for them?

Want to borrow a heart hack?

"Your family's culture doesn't have to be left to chance. Your culture is either the one you've intentionally chosen to create or the one you've inadvertently allowed to create a life of its own."

Discuss each of these practical things our family did (pages 184-198) to help produce a grace-filled environment at home.

1. **Grace-filled Responses.** Grace is a gift. Grace is a choice. Grace is a place. And hopefully that place is your home... How have you made your home a place filled with grace?

2. **Core Family Values.** What are the things that we value most and why? And in what ways can we practically live these things out?
3. **Open Door Questions Policy.** Any question. Anytime. About anything.
4. **Say What You Want to See.** You always get more of what you criticize, and you always get more of what you affirm. Which comes more naturally for you?
5. **A High Priority On God's Word.** How are we making the Word of God central to everything we do as a family?
6. **All of Life Is Worship Motto.** Everything we do in every aspect of life is meant to bring God glory.

“The way we eat, play, and sleep is an act of worship. The way we do relationships, work, and day-to-day life is an act of worship. The way we do school, church, and home is an act of worship.”

7. **A Proper Balance of Grace and Truth.** Jesus was all grace and all truth all at the same time. In what ways can we strike the balance of truth and grace... rules and relationship... the head and the heart?

Ask and answer:

- Which of these do we already practice in our home, or need to implement?
- What others not listed do we practice in our home to produce a grace-filled environment?
- What are the multi-generational blessings or consequences of growing up in, or failing to grow up in, a grace-filled environment?
- How can focusing on any or all of these things prepare your child's heart for a life of grace?

Which “Helpful How-to Heart Hack” on page 199 is the best practical takeaway for you from this chapter?

As time allows, finish by discussing any “Heart of the Matter” questions on page 199-200.

EXTRA NOTES:



Godly Parenting | Session #9

Leading Your Child to Christ

Prep: Read Chapter 9

Group Kick-Off (start with any or all of these)

Break the Ice:

- Share one of the funniest things you've ever seen happen in a church service.
- What is one takeaway that you highlighted or that stood out to you in this chapter?

Set the Stage: (Review from Session #8):

Reaching your child's heart requires balance. A godly parent must learn how to properly balance rules & relationship and truth & grace. This is most seen exemplified in our lives rather than through our words. As one person once wisely said, "If a person's words and actions don't agree, always believe their actions."

Key Verse:

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. -2 Timothy 3:15

BIG IDEA:

A parent's greatest responsibility and primary goal is to lead their child into a lifelong relationship with Jesus and an eternity in heaven.

Identifying your goal:

If the goal of leading our children to Christ is just getting them to pray a prayer in a moment, then we may have missed the mark of what we've been called to do. But if our goal is leading them into a lifelong relationship with Jesus (that may begin with that moment of prayer), there is much more hope and promise for their future. As Christian parents, we are striving to raise children who will become fully devoted followers of Jesus for a lifetime, not just "golden-ticket holders" who have a pass into heaven. This does not happen by accident.

Religious Profession or Personal Relationship?

How would you answer the question at the top of page 204 in the book?... "In your home, is there an emphasis on a personal relationship with God?"

- What are some practical daily ways our kids should see our family’s life as being different from other’s because of our personal relationship with Jesus? (refer back to page 204 for ideas if necessary)

If your children were to rate your own personal relationship with Jesus by the following scale, which would be most accurate?

1. My parents do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.
2. My parents say that they are following Jesus, but their actions often fail to match their words.
3. My parents are Christians who do a good job of looking the part on Sundays.
4. My parents are genuine followers of Christ who struggle yet strive to live like Jesus.
5. My parents are genuine followers of Christ whose life demonstrates that they walk in the Spirit daily and seek to live out the Gospel in their daily lives?

While we can’t force faith into our children’s hearts, we can make faith look good, and real, and desirable through our lives and examples.

- What are some things in our lives that can make our faith look authentic and appealing to our children?
- How can a false faith, or a parent who fails to represent faith well, have a negative impact on a child’s view of, or relationship with, God?
- Aside from your example, one of the most powerful tools you have to help your children come to personal faith is your own testimony of how God saved you. Do your kids know your salvation story? Have you shared it with them in detail? If not, why not do it this week?

Requirements for Salvation

Any person is saved by believing the Gospel—trusting in Jesus alone for salvation. But how does that come about? There are three things that must be in place:

- Understanding (I am a sinner in need of a Savior.)
- Conviction (Jesus died for MY sin.)
- Repentance (A change of mind towards sin that results in a change of heart towards God.)
- Which of these three often comes the easiest and quickest for children?
- What is the danger in leading a child to pray a prayer of salvation if they only have an understanding of the Gospel, but not a personal conviction of sin?
- What are some steps we can take to prevent false professions of faith in our children

“Salvation is not simply getting a child to pray a prayer. However, salvation is an inward transformation of the heart that can be expressed through a prayer.”

- Read I Corinthians 3:6. God alone can save anyone. The fruit of salvation cannot be forced or manufactured. How should the principle of this verse apply to our approach in leading our children to Christ?
- How can parents better encourage a lifetime of choosing to follow Jesus over focusing on just a moment of salvation alone?

Helpful Tip:

If your child has an understanding of the Gospel, but you're unsure whether or not the child is under conviction and ready to be saved, use this question, "When do you want to do that?" Their answer to this question will help you gauge whether or not their growing understanding has turned into an increasing urgency about their own need to be saved.

Which "Helpful How-to Heart Hack" on page 217 is the best practical takeaway for you from this chapter?

As time allows, finish by discussing any "Heart of the Matter" questions on page 217-218.

EXTRA NOTES:
