



# The *Busy* Parent

Entertaining, easy to read, practical & Biblical workbook

**How to be a Hero to Your Kids  
in Just Minutes a Day!**

# The Busy Parent

## How to be a Hero to Your Kids in Just Minutes a Day

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May the greatest Parent of all,  
guide you to be a parent as kind as He.

*This little book is my gift to you;  
I hope it is a blessing.  
Please do let me know if there is  
ever anything I can do to help you.  
May God bless you! Also, drop  
by my website if you get a chance!*

**[Visit My Website!](#)**

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## Is the Busy Parent the Right Book for You?

"I'm buried." "I don't have the time." "Not now."

Do these statements sound familiar?

Does frustration hammer at your nerves as you wedge another appointment into your bulging calendar...another task in your "To Do?"

Are you breathing heavy, feeling anxious, checking your watch, grabbing your pager, answering your cell phone, jotting in your PDA or tapping your keyboard like a woodpecker with a bad amphetamine habit?

If that's you, you're a prime candidate for this book, so let me be the first to welcome you to the "Parents on the Run" club. We're the folks out of breath as we pinch and patch together a few more crumbs of time for our fast-track families.

We speed through the tasks of our day like greased down vipers—speedy workplace warriors. *The Flash* had nothing on you and me.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is upon us and we're movin' and shakin' like tornadoes gone wild. The whole time we're just trying to get home.

To help survive and succeed our full-throttle, 200 M.P.H. lives, *The Busy Parent* offers quick-paced, no-filler advice.

In *The Busy Parent*, you'll not find the history of the great parents of our time. Nor will you go blind with mind-numbing, highbrow-hullabaloo like, "*The Psychological Ramifications of the parent Image to the Child in Today's Modern Culture*". Nope, this is a simple, step-by-step book for everyday folk who just want to be better parents while running in fast forward.

## **NOTE to New or Aspiring Parents**

If you're a new parent or if you hope to be a parent someday, we veterans salute you. Indeed, we stand at attention and with humility; pass the torch of parenthood to you.

Sooner or later, that torch will set your hair ablaze. Yes, my blessed new parent, soon the time will come when you will notice an unusual prickly sensation in the back of your brain. This is known as "Ivegotkidsitis".

You'll know you have it when your mouth stops working. What I mean is your mouth will open, but few words will escape. You'll stare at your kids in disbelief while the words, "Oh no," fall from your lips.

Grunts, exasperated exhales, and nervous twitches—these are all signs of the disease. I'm kidding, of course, but though the trials of parenthood are many, after twenty-five years of it, I've learned this: there is no goal nobler, more satisfying, nor more worthy than to raise my family.

Nothing competes with the satisfaction of bending down on one knee and helping your son swing a bat, tie his shoe or say a prayer.

The magic of Miss America pales compared to your little girl donning her first Sunday dress.

Oh, and make sure someone has a camera to capture your face the first time she calls you "mommy" or "daddy", and every time, thereafter.

In these easy and enjoyable moments, as well as the times of challenge, I've come to believe there is only one way to go through the child rearing years: with your knees firmly fastened to the floor and your eyes fixed on Heaven. Surely, no one knows the pain and joy of parenting better than He. "...His name is the LORD—a father..." Psalm 68:4-5 (L.B.)

## How to Use *The Busy Parent*

Did you ever hear this: “Books are precious, don’t fold the pages, don’t crease the corners, and don’t write on your book?” Forget it. This is not some collectible coffee table book.

It may help if you treat *The Busy Parent* like one of those project plans you tear out of a magazine and carry around in your back pocket as you work on your home weekend project.

*The Busy Parent* is a throw-on-your-jeans, strap-on-your-goggles, rev-up-the-table-saw and kick-through-the-sawdust workbook. It’s more like a road map than a library book.

Throughout *The Busy Parent*, you’ll find sections entitled, **Plans, Preparations, Prayer** and **Ponderings**.

“**Plans**” is used for scripture. I believe that the “plans” or “blueprints” we use to build our parenting should be the Word of God.

**Preparations** heads a list of questions, statements or thoughts designed to challenge us as parents.

**Prayer** is the greatest “power tool” God has given us to build our children. These “parenting” prayers are brief, but to the point.

**Ponderings** is a place to write down your thoughts and ideas as you move through the book.

With that in mind, whether you are a new parent or a battle-worn veteran, may God bless you with a sharp insight into parenthood. May He give you the right words at the right moments. May wisdom surround your actions. May you be a parent to your children as He is to you. Welcome to *The Busy Parent*.

## The Greatest Secret

If you remember the ad you read for this book, I mentioned that I had come across a secret that allowed me to transform the typical everyday family events into moments that children would remember and treasure.

Before I reveal that simple little secret, let me say that much of this book has to do with a step-by-step approach to changing you as a person. The result to that change will be a dramatic impact on your relationship with your kids.

I will take you through those steps, but without further delay, here is my secret, first by way of an illustration.

Think about the beginning to just about every movie. For example: we see an aerial view of a big city at night. We hover above the darkened skyscrapers, each dotted with varying amounts of office windows, some lit, some dark.

Below, cars creep along the streets like shiny metal ants bathed in the dingy yellow glow of street lights.

We move to the ground and peer down a sleepy street lined with shops. A figure in a raincoat moves out of the alley shadows and hurries away from us. They race around the corner and out of our sight.

Suddenly, with a deafening PHOOM, a storefront explodes like a volcano. Deep orange flames and billowing black smoke fill the street. Glass tinkles down to the concrete all around us. FADE TO BLACK.

What just happened? Who knows? That's exactly my point. This whole scene was one big question. Why did you watch the scene with interest? If you examine this to the deepest level, you watched it because it was a mystery. You wanted to know what was going to happen.

Let's take apart the questions the writer was placing in your mind without you really being aware.

What city is this?

Who's that figure in the raincoat?

Why did they hurry out of that alley?

Were they running from us?

Why were they running away?

Why did that storefront explode?

Did the figure in the raincoat have something to do with the explosion?

If so, what and why?

This tactic was born thousands of years ago. Aristotle said that the greatest tool of communication is "the question."

Why? Because it forces your brain from passive mode to active mode. It makes you think, rather than just observe.

For an interesting Bible study, note how many times Jesus asks questions in the Gospels. Why? Because He created "communication" and He knew that you can draw people in with a question. He wanted people to think, to look within themselves and answer the questions He asked, because it was there that they would discover the beginning of who He was—God.

Now, you're asking what does all that have to do with me becoming a better parent and turning everyday moments into treasured memories.

Glad you asked. Let me give you a real-life example that happened in our home.

One of my kids called me on the phone at my office and said, "Dad, mom and me got into a big argument. Then she grounded me, but I didn't do anything wrong."

Before my "big secret discovery," I would have had two responses to that phone call.

I'd be slightly annoyed that they were calling me at work to "rat" on their mother and try to get me to take sides.

I would have spouted off something like, "Obey your mother."

Technically, I could get away with my annoyance, because they shouldn't try to get me to take sides. Also, I could get away with saying to them that they should obey their mother, because they should.

The problem is that I would have done nothing to improve my relationship with my child if that's all I did.

After my big discovery, here's how I would have handled that call.

How do you feel about the argument with your mom?

Why are you angry?

How did the argument start?

Do you think your mom is angry, too?

Why do you think she's angry?

What could you have done to prevent the argument?

Do you think you were right?

There are more questions I could ask, but the point is threefold.

To allow them to safely vent their feelings.

To open up the possibility of conversation with my child and prevent them from feeling alienated.

And finally, this leads to the opportunity to bring Spiritual truth to them.

Author, Larry Crabb in his book, *"Encouragement, The Key to Caring"* states that asking people questions when they are upset signals to them that you care.

I have found that after practice, I can now "create" meaningful conversations with my children just by turning anything into a question.

"Why do you think you failed that math test?"

"What did you learn about yourself when your girlfriend broke up with you?"

"Why do you think God chose to make the sky blue instead of red?"

"How do you think Michael Jordan got to be so good at basketball?"

The answers to some of these questions are obvious, but that's not the point. The point is getting your child to engage with you.

Of what value is that or how important is that? God made us to communicate with each other. As the book of Romans states, He also meant for us to "build one another up," "care for one another," "love one another," etc.

By loading questions into the seemingly "little" daily events, you subconsciously telegraph to your child that you are interested in them, you care about them, you love them.

Our children need us to meet them where they live, on their ground, in the middle of what's important to them.

One of the things I love most about Jesus, is that he got right in the middle of people's lives. He was and still is active.

Questions pave the way and unlock the door to real communication. And that is something that your children will remember about you forever—you cared enough to ask them questions.

I have found this "secret" to be one of the most powerful tools in my parenting. I'm sure as you practice it each day with your children, you too, will find the little things in daily life becoming precious moments you and your children will never forget.

Now, let's talk more about questions, you, God and your children.

## Definition of a Parent

Let's begin with a question: what is a parent? Can you define a parent? No, don't run to Webster's. It's your task alone, so what is the definition of a parent?

NOTE: Since you are using the ebook version of The Busy Parent, you will need to use a paper notebook along with the ebook to complete the exercises within The Busy Parent. Continue when you have your notebook available.

Don't be too concerned with getting it perfect. You'll have plenty of opportunities throughout this book to revise your definition.

For now, we just need a place to start, so take a few moments and write your definition of a parent.

**TIP: Try a 60-second prayer with your kids in the a.m. or p.m., every day for just one week.**

*"One parent is more than a hundred schoolmasters."*

*17<sup>th</sup>-century English proverb*

4:50 A.M.

It felt like a 12-pound block on his chest. The doctor said it was stress. Gary didn't care. He was no longer interested in finding out *why* a boa constrictor was wrapped around his lungs for the last three weeks. The shortness of breath, the ache above his rib cage—he just wanted it to stop.

Gary lay on his back and stared into the blinding darkness. He knew that on this day, when daylight finally came, another one of his friends would lose their job. The company had been laying off people in legions. Associates of 15 and 20 years disappeared from the halls every week. Gary suspected the big guns would hunt him next.

Gary was overtired, frustrated, and full of brewing venom. He fidgeted. If he could just find the perfect arrangement of bones to mattress, his aching body might have mercy and allow him the sleep he was due.

But no matter how he twisted, the bed just wouldn't give up a moment's rest. He couldn't get comfortable. It was hot; the sticky, throw-off-the-blankets, don't-move-because-you're-sweating...*hot*.

August, 96 degrees and the air conditioning doesn't work. Here was the Florida never mentioned in tourist ads. Folks seldom remember that Florida was once an overgrown, mosquito and alligator-infested jungle.

Forget tropical paradise; this was the South, which by geographic fact is closer to the Equator, and in some minds, right next to the Lake of Fire in the book of Revelation. The ceiling fan hummed...no relief.

Gary yanked the pillow out from under his head and tossed the sweaty feather sack aside. With a huge sigh, he rolled over and was eye to eye with the intruder. Inches from his face, it just stared at him while its eerie, blue glow gently oozed over the nightstand. Without a sound, its phosphorescent digits reminded Gary that it had won again. Like a taunting bully, over and over, it flashed 4:52 A.M.

He was about to get up when the question whispered in his mind,

“Are you a good parent?”

He hardly had time to answer when like a ten-ton locomotive, the second question barreled through his brain,

“How do you know?”

This wasn't the time for a psychological inquisition. He needed to wrench out a drop of real sleep here. Nevertheless, the questions kept bouncing off the corners of his mind:

“Are you a good parent?”

“Yes, I am.”

“How do you know?”

“Well, I . . . uh . . .”

“Are you a good parent?”

“I GUESS NOT!”

“How do you know?”

“I...a...um....”

The queries carefully chipped at every stone in his wall of defense. He didn't want to answer. However, the more he let go, the more he realized the surgical hand of the Master at work. 5 o'clock in the morning

and God shows up to play 20 questions—what was He doing?

Have you ever wondered why God asks any questions? He knows everything. Why bother asking a man anything, as if we're going to tell Him something He didn't already know. God doesn't ask a man a question so the man can enlighten his Creator. God asks a man a question so the man will have to *think*. For instance, Jesus asks His disciples,

"But what about you?" "Who do you say I am?"  
Matthew 16:15

He asks Adam,

"Where are you?" Genesis 3:9

In addition, He asks the Pharisees,

"...Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk?'" Matthew 9:5

In Genesis 3:9, God wants Adam to think. He wants him to realize where Adam *really* is, apart, and hiding from God. Jehovah is speaking to Adam's spiritual condition, not his geographic location. Both of which God already knew. However, He wants *Adam* to know it, to properly estimate his *spiritual* "location".

In Matthew 9:5, He wants the Pharisees to conclude that both of these things, raising someone from the dead and forgiving someone's sins are impossible for a man to accomplish. However, they are not impossible for the Son of God. He's giving them a chance to reckon with *who* He really is aside from his flesh incognito.

In Matthew 16:15, Jesus wants the disciples to get a hold of the same thing,

"You're talking face to face with the Christ here gentlemen. Your lives are about to change."

In all these examples, Jesus, the finest teacher ever to walk the earth, knew that people learn best by discovery rather than lecture. And this same teacher was at it again here at Gary's bedside. He was going about His way, asking questions, *real brain benders*. Those questions started an upheaval in Gary's soul, an avalanche of wiry thoughts. Gary, like the disciples, had to come to some conclusions. He had to reckon with the Messiah.

The Almighty was questioning Gary in regard to his parenting skills. This was no small thing. In the months that followed, Gary referred to those questions often, "*Are you a good parent?*" and "*How do you know?*"

It was a checkpoint. He'd ask himself the questions, then he'd answer. Sometimes he liked his answers. Other times he avoided the whole exercise to keep from guilt.

How would you answer those questions? Use your notebook to jot down your answers.

Are you a good parent?

How do you know?

## The “Which Parent Are You?” Quiz

*“The father (or mother) of a righteous man has great joy; he who has a wise son delights in him.”*

*Proverbs 23:24 (NIV)*

The following is an informal indicator to help us define our stage of parenthood. There’s only one rule: Answer exactly how you are now, not how you want to be in the future.

Answer the following questions with either *okay*, *so-so*, or *not too good*. Use your notebook to write down your answers.

How are you doing balancing your job with your family? \_\_\_\_\_

How are your finances doing? \_\_\_\_\_

How are your relationships with people outside your job? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you think you’re doing as a parent? \_\_\_\_\_

How does your wife think you’re doing as a parent?  
\_\_\_\_\_

How do your parents think you're doing as a parent?

\_\_\_\_\_

How do your kids think you're doing as a parent?

\_\_\_\_\_

How are your relationships with people at your job?

\_\_\_\_\_

How is your frustration level? \_\_\_\_\_

How are you doing with your hobbies? \_\_\_\_\_

If your overall answer seems to be "so-so" or "not too good", you're probably parent #1. If your overall answer is "okay", you're probably parent #2.

### **PARENT #1: The Everything's-Not-So-Okay Parent**

This parent struggles to keep up with work and their family. Finances are rough. They doubt their parenting abilities. They're feeling a bit hopeless.

### **PARENT #2: The Everything's-Okay Parent**

This parent is doing fairly well with balancing their job and family. Finances aren't too bad. Relationships are good. Generally, they're okay. They feel that they're a decent parent. They're just looking for some ideas to help them become a better parent.

1. Write down which parent you are. Use the first person, e.g., I'm parent #1. I'm struggling to keep up with work and my family. Our finances are suffering and I really doubt my parenting skills.

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2. Write down how you came to be PARENT #1 or PARENT #2:

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If you're PARENT #2, our hat's are off to you for managing to hold it all together. I believe you'll find some ideas in this book that will further help you on the path to better parenting.

If you're PARENT #1, you will likewise find helps for parenting in this book. However, I'd like to share a story with you before you read further.

One day Satan decided to have a garage sale. He set up a card table and laid out all his tools. He marked the prices on each tool:

ANGER- \$100.00

RESENTMENT-\$400.00

HATRED-\$1600.00

He continued to mark prices, and after a short while, Satan found buyers for most of his wares. He was taking down his display when an old and experienced shopper came along.

The shopper noticed a tool at the end of the table. The tool was ancient. It had rusty, jagged edges and sharp blades; its mission was to thrash.

Obviously, this was the most dangerous tool of the lot. The shopper picked up the tool and asked Satan, "How much for this one?"

"I'm sorry, that tool isn't for sale." Satan said.

"I'll pay double. I'd really like to have this tool."

"Sir, I've told you already, that tool is not for sale, nor will it ever be. It's the most effective tool in my collection. If I could own but one tool, it would be that one. With that tool I can accomplish my every task. Now good day sir."

Sensing defeat, the buyer left and Satan packed up his goods.

The name of the tool Satan would not sell is "Discouragement". I know of no greater weapon against the soul of man.

If I can keep you discouraged, I can stop you. When parents become discouraged about being parents, they cease to be good parents. They become people who simply have kids. Then, kids grow up without the special attention only their parent can provide.

If that's you, hang on, discouragement is not God's will for you. Second Timothy 1:7 says, "God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

Hold on to that scripture and listen to this: The fact that you're reading this book is an excellent sign of hope. Any effort made to be a better parent is already making you a better parent.

When you decide it's time to be a better parent—you're at the beginning of becoming a better parent. Hang in there mom or dad.

Whichever you are, the “Everything’s-OK parent” or the “Everything’s-Not-So-O.K. parent”, you’re to be applauded.

You’re one of the folks who will raise kids to last. Those kids will always remember that their mom or dad loves them.

Ultimately, they’ll also cherish the knowledge that their heavenly parent loves them; this they’ll learn because of the love they see in you.

God, we want to be better parents. Life is rushing by and we have so many responsibilities. It seems like there are too many things that need our attention. Sometimes we can’t find a way to balance work with family. We get discouraged. Some of us, at times, don’t even want to be a parent. Please grant us strength and encourage us. Help us to be the parent our children need. Help us to be the parent you intended us to be. Help us build a plan to become that parent. Amen.

Would you like to revise your definition of a parent?

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**TIP:** Am I diligent to have order in my life so that I may have **un-rushed time to spend with my children?**

## Overtaxed Parents of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

*When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years.*

*Mark Twain, American author*

6:00 P.M. - Gary's house

Exhausted and dazed, Gary pulled into his driveway. As he got out of the car and dragged himself up to the front door, it seemed as if an invisible assailant had strapped one-hundred pound sandbags to each of his legs.

Gary was like a mighty heavyweight champion, punch drunk and battered, as he staggered away from the center ring.

His shoulders sagged under the familiar weight of another 10-hour pounding at the office.

He shoved the key in the lock and with one twist, pushed open the front door. Gary trudged into the living room and almost stumbled over his kids.

They were down on all fours as they tumbled and tossed across the floor. It looked like one of those National Geographic scenes with little bear cubs playfully pawing and rolling over each other.

"Come on dad, play with us."

"Not now. daddy's tired."

Gary felt that familiar inner struggle: he knew he should play with them but he just didn't feel like it.

They were too young to understand that he was exhausted from doing what he had to do in order to take care of their needs.

With enough persuasion, he might have given in and started another session of *Monopoly*, *Checkers* or *Chutes and Ladders*.

Here was that same old problem; Gary's enthusiasm didn't exactly brim over. He wanted to play with them; but he lacked heart, and—*they knew it*.

They didn't understand how life was slowly drained from Gary each day on the job. They didn't know the toll stress takes on a mom or dad when they're concerned about the welfare and survival of their family.

He looked into their hopeful little eyes as the guilty verdict flooded his conscience. "You're a lousy dad. How can you say you love these kids, but you can't even get up enough energy to play with them?"

Then, when he finished feeling sorry for himself, he felt sorry for them. The thought slammed Gary like an iron hammer.

"Maybe they think I don't like to play with them. Maybe they think I don't love them. It's not true. I do love them. I just have to work a lot and I'm tired."

Gary's thoughts were nixed by the sound of his wife's voice,

"Honey, you haven't been paying enough attention to the kids lately."

He knew that; her flashing neon words only heaped further conviction on his already bruised heart.

"How do I meet the growing financial demands of this household and still be around enough for my family?"

"How will I put my kids through college?"

“How will we pay the bills?”

He knew that debt was becoming a way of life for his family. And—debt was *slowly* killing them. How could he possibly make enough money and still have enough time and energy for everyone in his family?

Quietly, painfully, and without answers, Gary held his frustration to a constant simmer. “*I’m not making it as a dad.*” He thought.

“I desperately want to be a better dad, but I’m just so darn busy. I’m putting in ridiculous hours working two, sometimes three jobs, and I still can’t make enough money.”

Gary had the noble intention of doing the best for his family. He took on project after project and seized every task and ticket that promised promotion. “*It’s for my family.*”

“It’s to make sure they’re taken care of now and in the future.” He thought.

Certainly “taking care” of his family didn’t only mean financially. Gary understood that. He knew they also needed his emotional support, but these were difficult times.

Many were losing their livelihoods. The dollar was stretched as far as it could go, and Gary was way too busy just trying to keep his family alive.

He worked longer hours, but it seemed as if he was earning less money. “*Where was it going?*”

All those sayings he heard as a kid came back to him:

“Money doesn’t grow on trees.

“Is that money burning a hole in your pocket?”

“Save your pennies.”

But this wasn't a case of spending carelessly or not trying to save money.

Everyday life was beginning to cost *too* much. To make up for it, Gary had to take on more work. That meant he was seeing less of his children.

Gary understood that his kids needed him to provide strength, protection, teaching, example, support, and wisdom. He also knew they needed him to provide clothing, shelter, food, insurance, doctors, entertainment and schooling. Therein was the paradox; they needed his time and so much of his time had to be used working to get what they needed.

Does any of this sound familiar to you? Let me put it another way. Have you ever gone to the post office and looked at the P.O. boxes? They look like rows upon rows of little rooms, each with a little door. As a parent, sometimes I feel like the letter carrier who fills those boxes; every one of those boxes represents someone or something that needs my attention.

I run frantically from each box to the next filling it with whatever it is that the box needs from me. While I'm standing at one box, three more open up and say, "Give me your attention!"

As I run to those boxes, four more open and say, "Hey, get over here. We need a little help you know!"

It's like a dam that keeps sprouting leaks. You can't help feeling that if you don't keep plugging the leaks the whole thing is going to crumble. Here it comes, the big buzzword—STRESS; parents are drowning in it.

Some of us eat antacids and aspirins for breakfast. Good Christians aren't supposed to be stressed out...right?

Am I good Christian?

Am I trying so hard and yet doing it all wrong?

Where is God in all of this?

We want to be there for our kids. We don't want them to grow up with emotional problems because we weren't around. We want to be there, we really do. It's just that many of us can't seem to make it happen on a regular basis. Something is always pulling at us: a customer, pager, phone, boss, project, church, etc.

Every time we think we just about have the machine oiled up and working properly, another part falls off.

Why does it seem like providing for our families has to keep so many of us out of our homes and out of our kid's lives?

With this subtle stress, it seems as if there's a silent plague sweeping through the minds of many parents. It looks a lot like hopelessness. Many of us have a problem we can't solve. We feel beaten, like soldiers who know they're losing a war. We're suffering from battle fatigue.

It's compounded because as a Christian, we know we're not supposed to feel hopeless. In the midst of it all, our kids are getting older.

They were three years old yesterday and today they're moving out.

Are they ready?

Am I ready?

Do I regret my actions?

Did I spend enough time with them?

Here's the key question: How do we balance our kids' need to have us involved in their lives against their overall need for us to provide for them?

This same question kept rephrasing itself and attacking Gary.

I'm supposed to have the answers. I'm the dad. I'm the provider, the great hunter. I'm supposed to lead my family and I'm not sure where we're going." He thought.

In desperation, he hurled to the heavens, "*God, what do I do?*"

No reply, no sign in the sky, no angel with a message from the Almighty, instead, God chose to help Gary discover his own answers, one by one, while he struggled in the congested crucible of everyday life.

In his battle, Gary found two key principles that served as a foundation for the practical steps he would later take to achieve his goal to be a better parent.

In a little while, we'll look at those practical, "down-to-earth" steps, but first let's visit Gary's two imperative "up-to-heaven" principles.

**TIP: Do I have good self-control over my eating habits, exercise, and playtime?**

## Key Principals to a Parent's Success

*Perpetual devotion to what a man or woman calls his business is only to be sustained by perpetual neglect of many other things.*

*Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) Scottish novelist, essayist, poet*

There are two key principles on which Gary built his foundation for parenting:

1. The Bible is completely true
2. Christ is completely trustworthy

When Gary mentioned these principles to his friends at church, they all said the principles were “*good but kind of basic Christian stuff*”. We learn these things the first week as a Christian. Gary knew that, but he was seeing these truths in a new way.

### **The Bible is Completely True**

If we believe that Jehovah is God, then we must believe that for Him to be God, He must also be all-knowing and all-powerful; or how else could He then be God?

If we agree on that first point, we must then believe that since God is all-knowing and all-powerful, He is capable to make and keep everything we read in the Bible true. It makes no sense to think that He is God, but He wouldn't or couldn't ensure the accuracy of His own book. If He didn't guarantee it's accuracy than we wouldn't have a true set of instructions for living. This would mean we'd have to guess at how to live and therefore have excuses for improper living. In other words, God couldn't hold us accountable. Neither could we trust anything the Book says. If one error exists, it is possible for many errors to exist.

In addition, if the Bible were not 100% true, our salvation would not be assured, because if the Bible had errors, what if one of those errors were the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Do we really think that God would allow an error to exist in His explanation of salvation? If God wants us to come to Him, why would he allow it to become difficult for us to get to Him?

If the instructions for salvation were completely lost, no one *could* come to Christ, so this then is step 1.  
**We must believe the Bible is completely true.**

### **Christ is Completely Trustworthy**

Gary reasoned that if he really believed the first principle, "the Bible is completely true", he then must believe the Bible when it states:

God created man.

"...the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." Genesis 2:7 (NIV)

Equally, Gary reasoned that if the Bible is true when it says that God created man, Gary must also then believe the Bible when it says:

God cares for man

"The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who **trust** in him..." Nahum 1:7 (NIV)

Gary thought, "I must wholeheartedly **TRUST** God when He says He cares about me."

Why was it a question of trust? It was a question of trust because:

"The Lord formed the man from the dust of the ground..." (Genesis 2:7) This portion of scripture demonstrates that Christ is all-powerful and therefore **capable** of meeting Gary's needs.

"...He cares for those who trust in Him..." (Nahum 1:7) This portion of scripture demonstrates that Christ **cares** for us and therefore **wants to help us**.

Therefore, it is not a question of whether Christ is able to take care of us or if He desires to take care of us.

The actual question is are we willing to **trust** Christ to do what He said He wants to do for us.

If you asked Gary if he trusted God, he would say, "Of course!" However, his regular anxiety over the cares of life proved something different. The real answer was, "No." Gary didn't trust Him. He wanted to trust Him. He knew that as a Christian he was supposed to trust Him. He'd been a Christian for 20 years but he was still struggling with trusting God. What was the problem here?

Gary didn't realize it but the reason he had difficulty trusting his savior was that his mind was no longer seasoned properly to do so. He wasn't backsliding as if he turned his back and walked away from Jesus.

He went to worship, he prayed, he attended Christian events, and he read his Bible. Yet there was something missing. What was it?

Psalms 46:10 reads, "Be still, and know that I am God..." The Hebrew word for *still* is *raphah*. The word, *know* is the Hebrew word, *yada*. If we rewrite Psalm 46:10 using the Hebrew definitions for *raphah* and *yada*, it would read something like this:

Get alone, withdraw, and let go of everything; relax, be quiet, and learn what it means that He is great and able to do anything. He is God.

If we really understand that this verse tells us to get away, drop everything, experience Christ, and come to a solid understanding that He is almighty—we'll find trusting Him to be much easier.

Gary's problem was that he had become so busy not *being still* that it was easy to forget the "I am God" part.

This "illness" is akin to the suffering mentality of Martha, "But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made." Luke 10: 40-42. (NIV)

God's desire was for Gary to stop running in desperation and *allow* Him to help.

This required a change of mind. He didn't want Gary to quit his job and join a monastery. He wanted Gary to quit his desperation and join Him.

He wanted Gary to take the time to *know* Him. He never intended for Gary to try to solve everything himself. How ridiculous a thought that young David in 1 Samuel 17 could ever slay Goliath by himself.

It appears to natural eyes that David was physically *standing alone* but David did not solve his problem *on his own*. I am convinced David was not acting out of desperation. David was acting out of the peace and confidence resident in his heart.

That stuff came from allowing his God a proper place in David's life. That place is made by *being still and knowing He is God*.

For Gary, that meant getting alone with God before the daily rush began. It meant Gary had to spend as much time as he could *knowing* his God and being persistent at knowing Him.

Being a part of and going to Christian meetings wasn't enough. It was good, and necessary, but not enough. Going to the meetings, reading his Bible, praying, sharing his faith, fasting and fellowship were all activities and exercises that were supposed to lead Gary to *faith*. The activities are not themselves faith.

Doing all these things is not the same as *trusting in Christ*. If one isn't careful, he slips into the subtle trap of *feeling* Godly because he's so busy doing things that *appear* Godly. Yet, how much time has he actually spent alone with God?

Trust in another human being can't be developed with a few shallow encounters. Neither can trusting Christ become a reality with token prayers and spotty exposure to the Godhead.

There was no substitute. Gary wanted to know and trust Him, so Gary had to spend quality time alone with Him. It was in that time with Him that Gary began to sense the parent-heart of God.

Gary discovered that Jehovah really likes parenting. He had never thought about Him this way before. After all, God was the one who first told us to call Him "father". He invented the concept of parenting. And, just like Gary, God *is* a parent.

Gary saw that Jehovah enjoys nurturing, teaching, helping and providing. Who was Gary to take that joy away from Him? He was just a man who thought that knowing it all yourself, doing it all yourself, having all the answers yourself was okay.

"Oh, but we're men!

We're animals, powerhouses, mean machines, we can handle everything.

Winners are those that can solve all problems."

That attitude was familiar to Gary, but as he allowed himself more time with his Father, Gary began to hear the pride that underlies such thinking.

Pride is not the mark of a real man. Pride is the mark of a fool and "Pride goes before destruction..."

Proverbs 16:18

When the One who can take dead people and make them live again says He's on my side, who or what can be against me? It is foolishness to avoid the time each day to be *still* and *remember* that He is God, all-powerful and His desire is to help me.

### Summary

- 1) Many parents are overtaxed, stressed out, and have difficulty balancing their jobs with their families.
- 2) The Bible is completely true and Christ is completely trustworthy. The Bible says that God is a parent and He wants to help me as a parent.
- 3) I must prioritize the time to spend alone with God each day, so that I am reminded of who He is, and what He wants to do with me.

Would you like to revise your definition of a parent?

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## Three Critical Beliefs for Every Parent

*We think our parents fools, so wise we grow;  
Our wiser sons, no doubt will think us so.*

*Alexander Pope (1688-1744) English poet*

Gary found that a system of three critical beliefs was central to his development as a parent:

- 1) Becoming a better parent demands **priority**
- 2) Becoming a better parent demands **planning**
- 3) Becoming a better parent demands **practice**

## **CRITICAL BELIEF ONE: Becoming a Better Parent Demands PRIORITY**

It was December 2. Gary was on his way to the video store to return last night's entertainment when a question stepped up to the front of his brain.

"How do I know if being a better parent is a top priority in my life?"

Until that question arrived, Gary had been trying to find a way to *balance* his time between his job and his family. Another question demanded his attention.

"How do you know there is a balance?"

He thought about the idea of trying to balance time with his family and time with his job. Gary began to ponder that the two are not equally valuable. Gary thought,

"The job is not equal to my family. I have a job for supporting my family. My job exists for the sake of my family. My job is just a device that allows my family the necessities and some of the niceties in life."

That's why Gary always said,

"My family comes first and the job second."

Now, for the first time, he was wondering if that were true. Was the job taking up more emotional and mental real estate than his family? Did the job own him more than his family? Was Gary kidding himself?

Gary was on the job so much it naturally took the forefront of his mind. He was with the job most of the time, so he thought about it most of the time. It was a subtle thing. He never intended to be possessed by his job.

Something Gary noticed was if he allowed it to, his career seemed to take up more and more of his thinking. He justified this by saying,

“It’s for my family.”

However, the real problem here was that often times it was for him. He was after position. He wanted a higher salary. He won awards. These were all good intentions and accomplishments. But was he really doing them for his family or his own self worth?

This was a sneaky thought. It took time to scrutinize. Gary prayed,

“God reveal to me why I work the way I do. Where is it that I really derive my self worth?”

He also came across the notion that he might enjoy working to actually get away from the family. The tasks at work were often more interesting than those at home. Gary began to think,

“If I change the way I look at my job maybe I’ll change the way I spend my time.”

Ultimately, he reversed his thinking process. Before he’d be with his family and he’d be thinking about the job, now he was at the job and thinking about his family. This didn’t mean he sat at his desk daydreaming about his loved ones when he should have been doing his work. It did mean that when he had free moments, his thoughts turned to his family and his God. It took practice.

Yet, Gary knew that if he were set on becoming a better parent, then his priority would chase him till he did everything in his power to make it happen.

Finally, Gary developed an answer to his original question, “How do I know if being a better parent *is* my priority?” His answer was, “Whatever I spend the majority of my free time doing or thinking about is my priority.” That was strong medicine. It was a

prescription he had to take on a regular basis. Through it, Gary found that his intentions were to be a better parent, but his *actions* didn't always demonstrate his *intentions*.

## **Plans**

"Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Give careful thought to your ways' " Haggai 1:5 (NIV)

## **Preparations** (use your notebook)

What do I spend the majority of my time doing?

About what do I spend the majority of my time thinking?

Is my self worth derived from my work, awards, looks, compliments from others, etc.?

Is my self worth derived from the knowledge that Christ loves me for who I am and only wants the best for me?

If I need to change, what action steps can I take to begin change?

## **Prayer**

God, reveal to me why I work the way I do. Where is it that I really derive my self worth? If I find my worth in other things besides you, please help me to change. Help me to think as you want me to think.

I know that I will only learn to think your way by studying your Word. Help me then to open your Word on a consistent basis. And as my thoughts align with yours, help me to set my priorities according to Your will. Amen.

## **Ponderings**

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## How Do Some Parents Become Great Parents

*Decide what you want, decide what you are willing to exchange for it. Establish your priorities and go to work.*

H. L. Hunt

Gary's growing desire to be a better parent reminded him of when he decided he wanted to be a great journalist. Once he'd made up his mind that being a journalist was what he wanted to do, it became his goal. Then, it became his priority. He worked doing whatever he could to earn the money for college. He studied the textbooks. He read the lives and works of accomplished journalists. He interviewed any journalist that stood still longer than 30 seconds. Becoming a great journalist was his passion.

One day Gary graduated and now he works everyday *practicing* and *polishing* his skills as a journalist.

We can accomplish many of the goals we set in our lives. However, to accomplish a goal we have to make it a priority. If we decide to become a truly great parent, we will. It's just like going to college to become an accountant or private trade school to become a computer programmer or serving an apprenticeship to become a carpenter. You put in the time studying and practicing your craft until you master it. If you *really* want to be a great parent, you will.

All of us know that we only do well at what is a priority in our lives. If we set a goal, then make it a priority to hit that goal; we'll lay out the plans to achieve the goal. It's just like sketching out the plans and details for a room addition on our homes. We figure the materials and cost and we build the room.

No goal is ever achieved without it first being a priority in one's life.

If we make better parenting our goal then it must become a top priority. Better parenting will be "built" when better parenting becomes a top priority.

### **Plans**

I *press on* toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.  
Philippians 3:14 (NIV)

### **Preparations**

- 1) Do I really want to become a better parent?
- 2) What am I willing to exchange?
- 3) Will I realign my priorities?
- 4) Am I willing to work as hard at parenting as I do my career?

### **Prayer**

God, if I am not the parent you desire, or if I am unwilling to change to become the parent you desire, then cause my life to develop in ways that will encourage me to change. Help me to keep my priorities proper in order that You can bring about the change that I'm asking. One day at a time, strengthen me to do the work that is necessary, to become the parent on Earth that reflects the parent in Heaven. Amen.

### **Ponderings**

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## The "POP" Quiz

*To bring up a child in the way he should go, travel that way yourself once in a while.*

*Josh Billings (1818-1885)  
American Humorist*

**Let's take a short quiz on priorities. Answer YES or NO to the following questions.**

Do I know the names of my children's teachers?

YES NO

Do I know my children's eye color, age, birth date and favorite cartoon?

YES NO

Do I spend seven or more hours a week directly involved with my kids?

YES NO

Do my children know my favorite color?

YES NO

Do I know names and phone numbers for my kids' doctors and dentists?

YES NO

Do I know the times and locations of my children's activities, e.g., baseball games, piano lessons, gymnastics, etc.

YES NO

Do I know my kids' favorite game?

YES NO

Do I know the names of my kids' friends?

YES NO

Do my kids' friends say they like me?

YES NO

Do I have a clear conscience regarding my involvement in my kid's lives?

YES NO

If our answers are more NO than YES it doesn't mean we don't love and care for our children. It may be an indicator that we're not living as close to them as we think. If this is the case, maybe we haven't made being a better parent a top priority yet.

## Plans

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your parent. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Matthew 10:29, 30 (NIV)

## Preparations

God is a parent and He cares about every detail concerning us including how many hairs there are on our heads. How involved are we in the "details" of our kids? Do we take our kids to the movies? That's the fun, easy stuff; and it's good. But, how involved are we with the people and things that make up our children's everyday life: doctor visits, hobbies, school, homework, friends, sports, etc.? How much time do we actually spend with them experiencing what they experience?

Have you ever suggested to your child to pray and ask God to calm their fear of getting a shot at the doctor? Have you ever told them to ask for God's help with their schoolwork or guidance with a problem their having with their friend? I'm sure many of us have spoken at least something along these lines to our kids. As Christians, these prayers are almost automatic.

Why then would we suggest that their *heavenly parent* would be present and involved helping them with the everyday things, if we as their *earthly parent* won't be present and involved? God is a parent and He cares about every detail concerning us. "And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Shouldn't we follow His example of parenting?

If someone asked our kids how involved they thought we were in their lives, what would they say? Think of one area of their lives that you can become more involved in and jot it down in your notebook.

## Prayer

Jesus, you said that the Father takes care of every need of every sparrow; not one sparrow falls to the ground without Him knowing about it. He even knows how many hairs there are on my head. Help me to pay that kind of attention to my children.  
Amen

## Ponderings

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Would you like to revise your definition of a parent?

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**TIP: My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will *prolong your life many years* and bring you prosperity.**  
Proverbs 3: 1-2 (NIV)

## How Involved am I with My Kids?

*Before I got married, I had six theories about bringing up children; now I have six children, and no theories.*

*John Wilmot - Earl of Rochester  
(1647-1680) English poet*

"All right, there's no doubt in my mind. I am definitely Superdad."

At least that's what Gary was thinking when he said, "You stay home and rest dear. I'll take the kid to the doctor. It's probably just the flu",

Gary hustled his youngest child into the car and off they went. When they arrived, he entered the doctor's office and quickly scanned the waiting room. He noticed there were only moms and kids...a lot of moms...a lot of kids...not many dads.

"Humph, I must be the only concerned and caring dad on planet earth these days. Just look at this. I'm the only dad in this place. I am definitely a wonderful dad." He thought.

Then, from behind the window, the short, hefty, all-business lady in the white nurse uniform called him front and center. A tan, number 2 pencil poked out of the tight, brown tuft piled on her head. A pair of black, circa 1959 "magnifying glasses" hanging on her nose made her eyes look like gigantic clams opening and closing every two seconds. She was the reincarnation of Mrs. O'Brien, a very lethal sixth grade teacher Gary had about a hundred years ago.

Then, the reincarnation barked her orders, "Sign in".

As Gary fumbled the pencil, he was sure she was about to say,

“Young man, place your name on the upper right hand corner of your paper and no talking with your classmates.”

Instead, she asked, “Is this his first visit?”

“Who?”

“The child standing next to you holding your hand. Does he belong to you?”

“Oh, yes. Yes, he does. This is my son.”

“That’s very nice. Is this his first visit with us?”

“Sure is.”

Jabbing a clipboard into his hands she said,

“Take a seat and fill this out.”

“Yes ma’am.” He said, feeling himself beginning to shrink. She fired a look that said,

“You should know you have to fill out these papers you silly little man.”

Two inches shorter, he backed away from the window and headed for the safety of the lime-green, vinyl-covered office furniture.

Gary sat on the squishy seat cushion and grabbed the battered pencil hanging from his clipboard.

Question 1: Name, Address, Age . . .

“Once you get past nurse Ratchet, there’s really nothing to this doctor visit stuff.” He thought, as he penciled in the correct answer.

Question 2: Child’s birth date . . .

“Hmmm . . .” He couldn’t seem to remember that one. He skipped it and went on to

Question 3: Known allergies?

“Oh, oh.”

Question 4: Family Physicians Name?

Clutching his clipboard, Gary stood up and approached the window like a mountain man gingerly approaching the cave of a 600-pound grizzly.

“May I use the phone?” He peeped.

The grizzly was gnawing on a cheap, dime store candy bar and flipping through the pages of Redbook. Without a word or even looking up,

Nurse Ratchet pawed her million buttoned, beige office phone into his hand. Her lips never moved, but Gary swore he heard her say,

“I knew you’d be back for this. That’s why I keep this phone here, just for imbecile dads like you who think they’re equipped to juggle kids at the doctor’s office. Take a hint buddy, leave this kind of work to a professional—your wife!”

He dialed and waited for the answers to come from that lovely, assuring voice.

“Hello.”

“Hi honey. I’m sorry to wake you, but I’m at the doctor’s office and there’s a grizzly, I mean there’s a few details I need to know.”

In moments, and with a casual “nothing-to-this-stuff” tone, his wife yawned the answers to the puzzles on his clipboard. There’s no doubt—male chauvinism suffered a serious drop kick that day.

Now, how is it that Gary's wife knew these things so well, yet Gary didn't have a clue? Simple, she's tuned into the kids much more than Gary. She lives in the everyday things with them.

Gary's wife has taken the kids to the doctor a quadrillion times. Gary did one visit, which in his typically male attitude should have qualified him as parent of the year. Sheesh!

If we don't know our children's allergies, it doesn't mean we're bad parents. However, it may mean that we're not as involved with our kids as we should be.

"But I don't have the time to do all that stuff."

I know that's what many of us are thinking. So let's find out just how much time we do have.

### **Plans**

"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, *making the most of every opportunity* . . ." Ephesians 5:15-16

### **Preparations**

Before you move on to the next section, write out how much time you think you have available to spend on your children each day of the week. Use the following as an example:

MONDAY:                    1 hour

TUESDAY:                    \_\_\_\_\_

WEDNESDAY: \_\_\_\_\_

THURSDAY: \_\_\_\_\_

FRIDAY: \_\_\_\_\_

SATURDAY: \_\_\_\_\_

SUNDAY: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Prayer**

Father, help me to accurately judge how much time I really have for my children. Amen.

### **Ponderings**

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**TIP: Am I as creative and resourceful applying my time to my family as I am to my job?**

## But I Just Don't Have the Time

*I recommend you to take care of the minutes: for hours will take care of themselves.*

*Lord Chesterfield (1694-1773)  
English statesman, man of letters*

Gary felt that he had very limited time to spend with his kids. He knew he'd have to make more time, but how?

He decided to do a survey. He created a worksheet that measured his activities and the time it took to finish each activity.

After using his worksheet for one week, Gary was encouraged to find that there was actually more potential time for his kids than he'd thought.

Next, Gary decided to try the worksheet for a month. The results were the same, if he could discipline himself to change some of his habits, he could have more time for his children.

Can you answer Gary's questions with actual hours and minutes?

How much time do I spend in front of the TV?

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time do I spend with my friends?

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time do I spend on my hobbies?

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How much time do I log on the job?

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How much time do I spend with my immediate family?

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How much time do I spend with each family member?

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More than likely, you and I can't answer those questions with any accuracy because we don't have a tool of measurement. That's why I'd like to encourage us to follow in Gary's footsteps and do our own survey.

The first time I did this I was amazed to see exactly where and how I spent my time for the last 30 days.

Use a sheet like the following to track your time for one week. Record each day and date. Then write in every task with the starting and ending time.

**DATE: Monday, December 1**

TASK DESCRIPTION: went to store  
START TIME: 9:00 a.m.  
FINISH TIME: 10:15 a.m.

TASK DESCRIPTION: washed car  
START TIME: 10:30 a.m.  
FINISH TIME: 12:15 p.m.

Here's something to watch, as in the example, what happened to the fifteen minutes between when you came back from the store and when you began to wash the car?

Time slips away easily and there are many time management books and tools available in stores. The example used here is just a simple tool, but can be powerful in the hands of a determined parent.

For a more revealing study, create a sheet that allows you to fill in your activities in 15-minute intervals. Use that sheet for one month. There are only two rules: 1) Don't change any of your normal behavior) and 2) Be honest. You'll be amazed at what you discover about how you use your time.

Now that you've completed your survey, on a separate sheet of paper, total up the time spent on the following categories:

Immediate family

\_\_\_\_\_

Individual family members

\_\_\_\_\_

On the job

---

Alone

---

Hobbies

---

Watching television

---

Spouse

---

Sleeping

---

Errands and household tasks

---

Miscellaneous

---

Look over your time sheets. How many times were there when you could have included your kids?

I'm not suggesting our kids spend every moment with us. But do we show a pattern of preferring other things to involvement with our children? If so, then maybe we've not made parenting a priority.

What we need to do is go back and look again at the time sheet. We have to rearrange things in our life till we fit our kids in.

If the only time we have is when we drive back and forth to the store, maybe instead of driving to the store alone, we could purposely take one of our children in order to spend time with them.

Let's say it's an extreme case and the only time we have is when we're sleeping. A couple of nights a week we could let our kids spread blankets on the floor and "camp out" with us. How about involving our kids in our hobbies.

One of the neat things I did recently was to build a computer with a couple of my kids. They needed one and I know a few things about PCs, so we bought the parts and spent a whole evening putting it together.

Of course, they got bored at times, but here's what my kids experienced while they were around:

- They learned the parts of a computer and their functions.
- They saw how dad handled the frustration when the computer didn't work.
- They witnessed dad's determination to make it work.

- They experienced the joy of seeing the power light flicker to life and their favorite games blast to the screen.
- Finally, they learned how to use different tools.
- Best of all, they spent quality time with dad.

Our kids need to be with us in the everyday stuff of our lives so they can see how we, as Christian parents, deal with those things. As well, we need to be involved in their everyday life. Our being there is an example of God's intention: a statement that says their heavenly Father wants to be involved with them. They need to know they can get to us so that they learn they can get to Him. In a proverbial nutshell, we're the face of God to our children.

Here's the hardest line of questioning I know. I apply it to myself and it's often painful. However, my answers let me know if I need to tune up my parenting or if I'm on the mark.

When my babies look at me, are they reminded of their Heavenly Father?

\_\_\_\_\_

Am I a lens they can look through to catch a glimpse of Christ?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do I represent a safe haven, a provider, and protector as He does?

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These questions will live with us till eternity. It's not over when our children reach adulthood because we all want to look to our parents as an example to follow.

We all need mentors. We all have the need to trust our parents and to be accepted by them. Therefore, once again, I must learn to be a parent like He. To a great extent, what they learn and feel most about God will be what they learn and feel most about me.

### **Plans**

"For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter..." Ecclesiastes 8:6

"Yet, O LORD, you are our father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand."  
Isaiah 64:8

### **Preparations**

Kids are born with the need for someone to guide, direct, and mold them; They're like clay. We have the opportunity and responsibility to help shape that clay. We share with the Lord in being the potters of our children. They'll find a way to be molded by someone else if we don't consistently make the time to mold them ourselves.

Based on your time survey, now write out how much time you have to spend on your children each day of

the week. Then compare this weekly time allotment to the one in the previous section.

MONDAY: \_\_\_\_\_

TUESDAY: \_\_\_\_\_

WEDNESDAY: \_\_\_\_\_

THURSDAY: \_\_\_\_\_

FRIDAY: \_\_\_\_\_

SATURDAY: \_\_\_\_\_

SUNDAY: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Prayer**

Father, life is busy. I feel as if I have to wear a dozen different hats in order to keep everyone happy. Sometimes I wish I were 10 years younger when life was simpler. Yet, I know I must do what's right. Help me do what is right. Regardless of my busy schedule, my children need me. Help me to consciously and carefully make my children a real priority. Help me to keep them as a priority. Amen.

## Ponderings

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## Summary

- 1) Have I made becoming a better parent a top priority in my life?
- 2) Do I honestly know how involved I am in my children's lives?

**TIP: Have I written my kids into my calendar the same way I would for an appointment or task?**

## CRITICAL BELIEF TWO: Becoming a Better Parent Demands PLANNING

*Men are generally more careful of the breed of their horses and dogs than of their children.*

*William Penn (1644-1718)  
religious leader, founder of Pennsylvania*

In the last section, we discussed getting our *priorities* in order. In this section, we'll begin *planning* practical steps to better parenting. Let's start with a little role-playing.

Pretend for a moment that you're a general contractor. Your mission in life is to build homes. One day a potential customer walks into your office. Let's call him Bob. Bob says,

"Hi, I want to have a home built and I was wondering if I could see some of your plans."

You reply, "Well, that's great Bob. We certainly love to build homes. I'm glad you stopped by. But you see Bob, we don't really have any plans. We just sort of start building and add things here and there till we end up with a new home."

Do you think your new customer would remain?

Okay, you're a schoolteacher. Twenty kids flood your classroom each day. Those kids have parents. Those parents expect you to produce learned students. One day the parents come to open house and ask:

“What sort of curriculum do you use, and what’s your daily activity plan?”

You say, “Well, I don’t really use curriculum. And as far as a daily activity plan goes, I don’t really plan anything. We just sort of go along and see what comes up.”

What do you suppose the reaction of the parents would be?

Obviously, these things don’t happen. However, every day across this planet, men and women tend to the task of parenting without any real plan in mind. Why? We attack the workplace with our armor properly suited, our weapons sharp, and our wits keen. We do battle each day for the provision of our family. We knock down the guarded walls of commerce. We clamor for position. We have plans—big plans. We’ve plotted our course for the promised land.

We’re going to make a better life for our family and we’ve cautiously laid our track to get there. This gritty ol’ steam engine will forge ahead to the land of opportunity. Yes, we know just how to get there because we have a map. And we wrote it. It may be subconscious, but most of us have such a plan.

This is noble and needed. This is great for business, income, and advancement. *But...*do we have a plan for parenting? Have we sat up at night figuring out how we would get from this point to that point as a parent? I hear the murmurs, “being a provider is part of being a parent”. Yes, I know. Yet, for so many of us, being the provider is much bigger than all the other parts of being a parent.

We don’t mean for it to be that way. It just happens. It’s a learned pattern and many of us can’t find the exit. Our bulging egos may not approve of us saying, “We need help.”

However, all across the world, and traveling on the same trail blazed by Promise Keepers and Women of Faith, parents are suddenly arising and speaking their needs. We're shaking off the sleep like a bear out of hibernation. There's a growing quest.

Men and women are saying, "We need more books, seminars, and sermons on being a parent. We need more encouragement to be a better parent. We need each other. We need help..."

This movement has potential to really change the world. Yet, when the last encouraging word of the last sermon is spoken, what we really must get after is the "how to". We need a set of plans for parenting. I wholeheartedly believe that if we commit as much energy, enthusiasm, and diligence to parenting as we do our careers and hobbies, the next generation will be something the contemporary world has never seen. We'll create the solutions to society's problems, and *those solutions will be our kids*.

If we do our job the way God intended, the church and the world will not be flooded with dysfunctional families, kids on drugs, juvenile violence, and gangs.

## **Plans**

". . . those who plan what is good find love and faithfulness." Proverbs 14:22 (NIV)

## **Preparations**

Father, we have a God-ordained mission and we must have a plan to carry it out.

Do I have a *specific, attainable, and measurable* daily plan for parenting or am I leaving it up to chance?

Sometimes we think we have to produce Disney world or a two-week vacation in the Ozark Mountains, etc.

The big events are great, but do we see the little opportunities each day? Most of us only have these “mega-activities” once or twice a year. But, we have every day to do or say some special, deliberate child/parent relationship-building thing.

On some days, this may only add up to 10 minutes of our time. However, if it’s consistent—it counts. *Kids need consistency.*

Are we, as providers, so wrapped up in the thought process of providing that we fail to see the opportunity to bless our children in a passing moment?

### **Prayer**

Lord, I’m working on making involvement with my children a top priority. Now help me to apply myself to planning my involvement. Help me to lay it out just as I would any other goal in my life. I need your wisdom in my planning. Thank You. Amen.

### **Ponderings**

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**TIP: Do I realize that my family needs my influence and presence as much as they need my bread winning?**

## How Do Your Friends and Family See You?

*Parents are people who bear children, bore teenagers, and board newlyweds.*

*anonymous*

As we begin the development of our “parenting plan” and before you go on to the retreat listed in the next section, it is imperative that you give a copy of the following questionnaire to selected friends and family members. Tell them they will be helping you to become a better parent. Therefore, even if it’s a bit uncomfortable, they must answer truthfully. They can answer “NOT SURE” for items that they have no knowledge. You’ll need to get their answers before leaving for your retreat. However, do not look at the answers until you are alone in your retreat setting.

It’s most helpful to gain a rounded evaluation. To do this, have a group of three to six individuals rate you. This should be a mixed team in regard to their relationship to you, e.g., your mother, parent, spouse, oldest child, close work associate, closest friend. Each of these people will have a different view of you; Their differing answers will give you a more rounded view of yourself. Of course, the accuracy of this exercise will be determined by whether they have been truthful and if you have been your true self before them. It is for this reason that you should select people who are close to you and you trust.

Use one of the following words to answer each statement below.

NEVER, SOMETIMES, OFTEN, USUALLY, ALWAYS, NOT SURE

Example: I am always happy: OFTEN

I am a friend.

\_\_\_\_\_

I can be described as a joyful person.

\_\_\_\_\_

I project peace.

\_\_\_\_\_

I end arguments or debates peacefully.

\_\_\_\_\_

I am patient.

\_\_\_\_\_

I practice using words that show genuine concern.

\_\_\_\_\_

I practice kind acts.

---

I drive the speed limit and in other ways am obedient to the law.

---

I am cheerful.

---

I demonstrate loyalty.

---

I express concern for those in need.

---

I do what I say I'll do.

---

I can be consistently relied upon.

---

I argue.

---

I have self-control.

---

I am grateful.

---

I try to build relationships.

---

I am realistic about my abilities and limitations.

---

I set realistic goals that are specific, attainable and measurable.

---

I apologize when I'm wrong.

---

I am generous with my time toward others.

---

I harbor resentments.

---

I am considerate of others.

---

I am overbearing.

---

I make excuses for my behavior.

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## RETREAT

*Children are all foreigners. We treat them as such.*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) American essayist, poet, philosopher*

In war, when an army retreats, it's for self-preservation, regrouping, building new strategies and preparation for the next effort. With hopefully some of the same results, I'd like to suggest a retreat for parents. I'm not implying that our homes are war zones; but a healthy retreat may help us to take a fresh approach and be better prepared for parenting in the future.

During our "retreat", we'll take a close look at our inner person. We should be able to see areas of success and areas we need to improve. Through the exercise, we'll begin to layout our blueprints for better parenting.

You should allow enough time in your schedule to go somewhere you can be totally alone for at least a day. I believe it's better to go for two days if possible.

Our main concerns must be solitude without distractions, and a quiet, restful environment.

Make sure you bring your unopened results from "How do Your Friends and Family See You?" Also, the following items may make your trip a bit more comfortable and productive.

## Retreat Checklist

Here's a checklist to aid you in preparing for your retreat. Include whatever other items you need to assure your comfort.

The Busy Parent "Total Quality parent Survey" and "Parent's Personal Inventory".

**NOTE:** You will need to copy the survey and inventory and take it with you. The survey is a few pages ahead, and the inventory follows the survey.

- Bible
- Pen or pencil
- Your personal planner or calendar
- All necessary clothing and personal items
- Food if necessary
- Extra cash

## Beginning Your Retreat

It is best to begin your retreat early in the morning. Having the retreat mindset is difficult when you're coming from work or from your responsibilities at home. If you can, arrive at your retreat spot very early in the morning or on the prior evening.

Once you have arrived at your destination, don't rush into the following pages. You should allow yourself the time to unpack and relax. Go for a walk, take a nap, do whatever is relaxing. When you're ready, begin with exercise 1.

### Exercise 1

Seat yourself comfortably. Open your hands with

your palms pointing upward. Extend both of your arms in front of you as if you are about to receive a package from someone.

Say this prayer: Father, I want to be a better parent. I want to be the parent you made me to be. Please use this time to teach me. Correct me where I've been wrong. Compliment me where I've been right. Thank you for this time we have together. I trust You completely. Amen.

Relax and meditate on the kindness and compassion of Christ. Remember times of blessings. Think of family members. Don't rush. Be calm. As meaningful thoughts come to you, without breaking concentration, write them into your notebook. Continue in this manner till you are comfortable with the idea of stopping. Thank the Lord and take a break.

## **Exercise 2**

Make sure you're comfortable. Close your eyes. Listen to the sounds around you. This is great if you're out in the woods. Spend some time meditating on one or more of the following verses.

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."  
Matthew 6:9 (NIV)

". . . and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."  
Matthew 11:27 (NIV)

". . . Lord, show us the Father." John 14:8 (NIV)

In the same manner as Exercise 1, write into your notebook any thoughts you'd like to keep.

This isn't a marathon. Don't try to meditate for an hour or any certain amount of time. You should only remain engaged in these exercises as long as they are beneficial to you. In this case, it's not quantity but quality.

### **Exercise 3**

When you're ready, begin with the "Total Quality Parent Survey" and finish by completing "Parent's Personal Inventory". As you work through the questions, it is important not to rush. Take as much time as you need. Answer truthfully and completely. Think deeply about your answers. Take breaks when you're tired. Do whatever is necessary to remain calm and relaxed as you complete these pages.

## The Total Quality Parent Survey

*"If Nature had arranged that husbands and wives should have children alternately there would never be more than three in a family."*

*Lawrence Housman (1865-1959)  
British actor, artist*

The Bible will provide us with the individual items or qualities on our checklist.

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."* Galatians 5:22 (NIV)

Can you think of better qualities for a parent to have than these?

After each checklist item, you'll find a bible passage to further amplify the meaning of the item. In some instances, the verse has been edited to highlight the focus of the verse. A definition from the original biblical language and a definition from a contemporary dictionary are also included. Once again, take your time working through the exercise.

## LOVE

Bible "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres."  
I Corinthians 13:5 NIV

Greek affection, good will.

Dictionary a deep or tender feeling of affection for

### Survey

How often do I tell my children that I love them?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do I understand that when I place conditions on my children for receiving my affections this is not really love? \_\_\_\_\_

Can I demonstrate my love to my kids regardless of their behavior or condition? \_\_\_\_\_

Do I show my children that I love them in a way that they understand? \_\_\_\_\_

How often do I hug my children? \_\_\_\_\_

### Discovery

What have I discovered about my ability to love?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## JOY

Bible "And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit".

Acts 13:52 NIV

Greek gladness

Dictionary happiness, great pleasure

### Survey

Can I describe joy in my own words?

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Is joy resident in my heart? \_\_\_\_\_

Would my children describe me as a joyful person?

---

Do my children bring me great pleasure?

---

When my children run up to me is it gladness they see in my eyes? \_\_\_\_\_

### Discovery

What have I discovered about joy in my life?

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## PEACE

Bible "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone". Romans 12:18 NIV

Greek quietness, exemption from the rage and havoc of war, harmony, security, safety, tranquil, content

Dictionary the absence of mental conflict; calm; quiet

### Survey

Do I project peace? \_\_\_\_\_

Am I a peacemaker in my home? \_\_\_\_\_

Do the arguments I am apart of within my home end peacefully? \_\_\_\_\_

Would most people describe me as "peaceful?"  
\_\_\_\_\_

Am I content? \_\_\_\_\_

### Discovery

What have I discovered about having peace in my life?

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## **PATIENCE**

*Bible* “And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone”. 1Thessalonians 5:14 NIV

*Greek* endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance forbearance, long-suffering, slowness in avenging wrongs

*Dictionary* the ability to wait or endure without complaint

### **Survey**

Am I patient with my children when they're loud?

\_\_\_\_\_

Am I patient with my children when they won't go to sleep? \_\_\_\_\_

Am I patient with my children when they knock on my bedroom door in the middle of the night?

\_\_\_\_\_

Am I patient with my children when they're afraid?

\_\_\_\_\_

Am I patient with my children when they can't understand what I'm explaining to them?

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Discovery**

What have I discovered about my patience level?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **KINDNESS**

*Bible* "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32 NIV

*Greek* moral goodness, integrity, kind acts

*Dictionary* sympathetic, friendly, gentle, tenderhearted, generous

### **Survey**

Do I demonstrate sympathy, concern and understanding when one of my children accidentally breaks something important in my home?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Am I kind to my family when I've had a hard day at the job? \_\_\_\_\_

Do I practice using words that show genuine concern when my child is telling me something that's important to them? \_\_\_\_\_

Do I practice kind acts to my family? \_\_\_\_\_

Do I forgive easily? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Discovery**

What have I discovered about my kindness factor?

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## GOODNESS

Bible " I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness..." Romans 15:14 NIV

Greek uprightness of heart and life

Dictionary morally sound, honest, benevolent

### Survey

Would my family say that I'm pleasant? \_\_\_\_\_

Would my family say that I drive the speed limit and in other ways am obedient to the law? \_\_\_\_\_

Am I cheerful? \_\_\_\_\_

Do I show loyalty? \_\_\_\_\_

Do I express concern for those in need? \_\_\_\_\_

### Discovery

What have I discovered about goodness in my life?

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## FAITHFULNESS

*Bible* "May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it."  
1 Thessalonians 5:24 NIV

*Greek* fidelity, generally with the included idea of trust, the character of one who can be relied on

*Dictionary* loyal, strong sense of duty, conscientious, reliable

### Survey

If I tell my children we will do something, do we do it? \_\_\_\_\_

If my child has an event at 7:00 P.M., do I show up on time? \_\_\_\_\_

Can I be CONSISTENTLY relied upon? \_\_\_\_\_

Am I worthy of someone's trust? \_\_\_\_\_

Am I loyal to my children? \_\_\_\_\_

### Discovery

What have I discovered about being faithful?

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## **GENTLENESS**

*Bible* “Be completely humble and gentle...” Ephesians 4:2 NIV

*Greek* mildness, meekness

*Dictionary* courteous, generous, serene, not violent, harsh, or rough

### **Survey**

What is the reaction I consistently demonstrate to my children when I am angry with them? \_\_\_\_\_

Do I consistently yell, slam doors or throw things when I’m angry?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do I consistently yell at other drivers when I’m in traffic? \_\_\_\_\_

When I discipline my children, is the discipline equal to the rule broken, or am I harsh? \_\_\_\_\_

Do I find myself in arguments often? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Discovery**

What have I discovered about being gentle?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## SELF CONTROL

*Bible* "...each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable..."

1 Thessalonians 4:4 NIV

*Greek* temperance, the virtue of one who masters his desires, passions, and appetites.

*Dictionary* control of one's emotions, desires, or actions.

### Survey

Do I constantly over eat? \_\_\_\_\_

Am I addicted to tobacco, alcohol or drugs?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do I have a problem with pornographic material?

\_\_\_\_\_

Is there anything in my life, of negative influence, that masters me? \_\_\_\_\_

Do I control my emotions well? \_\_\_\_\_

### Discovery

What have I discovered about my self-control?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**TIP: Do I need to adjust my priorities? Maybe it's time to make my children a priority the same way God makes me a priority.**

## Parent's Personal Inventory

*If you bungle raising your children, I don't think whatever else you do well matters very much.*

*Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (1929-1996) American former First Lady*

Answer the following statements and questions with NEVER, SOMETIMES or ALWAYS.

When you are done, count each NEVER as a zero, each SOMETIMES as a one and each ALWAYS as a two.

I avoid comparing my kids one to another or to other children. \_\_\_\_\_

I'm open to the fact that kids have their own problems and that they need guidance not dominance.  
\_\_\_\_\_

If I've tried but failed, can I constructively use what I've learned? \_\_\_\_\_

I'm trying to build relationships with other Godly parents. \_\_\_\_\_

I'm realistic about my abilities and limitations.  
\_\_\_\_\_

I've learned that no matter what happens I can always change my attitude. \_\_\_\_\_

I've forgiven my parents for any mistakes they made in my upbringing. \_\_\_\_\_

Would it be worth it for another parent to catch my attitudes? \_\_\_\_\_

I set realistic goals that are specific, attainable and measurable. \_\_\_\_\_

Others can count on me. \_\_\_\_\_

I help my kids learn responsibility by giving them tasks around the home. \_\_\_\_\_

I apologize when I'm wrong. \_\_\_\_\_

I'm a good example to my kids. \_\_\_\_\_

I'm grateful for God's blessings in my life.  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do I have a list of responsibilities that are genuinely mine? \_\_\_\_\_

Do I have a list of tasks that I really don't need to be doing? \_\_\_\_\_

I'm generous with my time toward my family.  
\_\_\_\_\_

I can compromise with my kids without always demanding my own way. \_\_\_\_\_

Am I harboring any resentments? If so, can I list them? \_\_\_\_\_

I listen attentively when my children are speaking.  
\_\_\_\_\_

I'm considerate of my children with the tone and volume in my voice. \_\_\_\_\_

I try not to be overbearing. \_\_\_\_\_

I handle myself appropriately when I'm angry with my children. \_\_\_\_\_

I make excuses for my behavior. \_\_\_\_\_

Is there something I can do to relax that doesn't keep me away from my family too long? \_\_\_\_\_

I'm on time to my kids' activities. \_\_\_\_\_

I pray for my family each day. \_\_\_\_\_

Total your scores. Use the following guidelines to chart yourself.

0-7 Needs some help

8-14 Try a bit harder

15-21 Okay

22-28 Thumbs up

29-35 Great Job

36-42 Top of the Class

**TIP: I should check my focus when I get real busy. Are my priorities in proper perspective?**

## Developing Your Plan

*May he give you the desire of your heart  
and make all your plans succeed.*

*Psalm 20:4*

Review your answers to “The Total Quality Parent Survey,” and “Parent’s Personal Inventory”.

Now open the answers you received for “How Do Your Friends and Family See You?”

Look for dominant characteristics and patterns. As you work through the answers, you should be able to see where you shine and where you need improvement.

Take as long as you need to carefully construct a picture of yourself. When you feel that you have a good idea of what needs to change in your life in order for you to become a better parent, ask the Lord for guidance and complete the following sentences.

Answer in *specific* and *measurable* terms. Example:

I will spend more time with my kids. (GOOD ANSWER)

I will spend 1 hour each day with my children. (BETTER ANSWER)

In order for me to be a better parent I need to:

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I'm going to arrange my daily schedule in the following manner:

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Each day, with my children, I will:

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**Enjoy the rest of your retreat!**

## 18 Projects for You and Your Kids

Many of us are so busy working to take care of our kids, we forget how to have fun with these same children. Do you remember as a kid playing army, dress up, having dirt-ball fights, climbing trees and passing notes? That kind of fun didn't cost a penny. We had to use our imagination a bit more and that was fine. If we're not careful today, video games, an unending supply of sitcoms, and "chillin' at the mall" will own our children.

I've added this section as a means to help you structure some fun parent/kid activities into your plan for better parenting. The "projects" are designed to help you turn your plans for better parenting into action. This is a list of activities you can do with your kids that won't break you financially or physically.

Just like when we were kids, you'll need to add your time and imagination. The goal is to create a specific action plan of events your children and you can enjoy together. We have to remember they need us to meet them on their ground. We shouldn't always try to make them fit into our world. Kids want to do the things they enjoy and they want parent to do those things with them. The following is a list of opportunities to meet their "fun" need and teach them about the Savior at the same time.

Select a project from the following project worksheets. On the "Project Due" line, write the exact day and time that you will do this project with your child. Make sure you write that into your personal calendar as you would any other appointment.

As an option, you could make a game out of selecting projects. Tear out the project sheets, put a number on the back of each one, and have your kids pick the number.

# 1. "Fashion and Parents"

**Names:**

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Project Due: / /

**Key Thought:** Your child is beautiful to God and you.

**Genesis 24:16** "The girl was very beautiful..."

## Discussion

Does your daughter know she's beautiful to you? Girls need to feel pretty. They need to know that they're acceptable to you. If she doesn't hear from you that she's beautiful, she'll find someone else to tell her. My wife said to me once, "If she doesn't sit on your lap, she'll sit on someone else's." I truly believe many a young lady could be spared a life of promiscuity if their daddy would have made them feel special and accepted.

1. Look through fashion magazines and discuss how beautiful the models are.
2. Ask your daughter if she feels pretty.
3. Talk about how beautiful your daughter is to you.
4. Talk about how beautiful we are to God.

## 2. "Clay Day"

**Names:**

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Project Due: /      /

**Key Thought:** God cares for us.

**Psalm 139:14** "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made..."

### Discussion

Does your child know how God cares for us? One of the ways God cares for us is demonstrated by how He carefully crafted us. Our bodies are perfectly suited for our planet. He's given us everything we need to survive. Have you and your children make some things out of modeling clay. Here's a few suggestions: people, houses, a castle, airplanes, and animals. There's a product called Sculpey that is easily molded like regular modeling clay.

It can be baked in the oven, which permanently hardens your sculpture. It's available at craft stores. While you're creating your projects with your kids, have a discussion on the following:

God made us out of the "dust" of the ground. Upon a closer examination of the word "dust", we see that it means "earth" or even clay.

Some years ago, I read in a newspaper that a group of scientists determined that the human body was mainly composed of the same elements as ordinary earth clay!

Discuss things like how God made our bodies so our heads don't flop from side to side. We have feet that are perfectly formed to support our bodies. How hard would it be to grab and pick things up without thumbs? Our ears allow us to hear, and our eyes grant us sight. Truly, our God has perfectly "shaped" us.

### 3. "Parents and Dolls"

**Names:**

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Project Due: / /

**Key Thought:** We can choose to do right or wrong.

**Joshua 24:15** "...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

#### **Discussion**

Play dolls with your child. Talk about how the dolls move whichever way we make them; they don't have a choice. But, God gave us a free will to move and do as we please.

We do have choices. God trusts us to make the right choices according to His Word. He hopes that we will choose to help others.

## 4. "Tin Foil Rockets"

**Names:**

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Project Due: / /

**Key Thought:** God created everything.

**Mark 13:19** "...when God created the world..."

### Discussion

God put things on Earth that He knew man could use. He also gave man a brain so man could learn and figure things out for himself. Look at a wooden match, the striker, and a piece of aluminum foil. God made the trees that supplied the wood for the match. He placed the sulfur in the Earth, from which the match head was made. God put chemicals and elements in our planet so we could create the striker for the match.

The Lord also placed aluminum in the Earth. Man used the brain God gave him to fashion these raw elements into the match, striker and foil. The match can be used to start a fire to keep us warm or to cook our food.

The foil can be used to wrap our food so it doesn't spoil. Also, aluminum is used in aircrafts. And we can make our own aircrafts out of this stuff too!

Cut a square from the foil 1.5 x 1.5 inches. Twist the foil a little, as you form a nose cone over the match head. Your tin foil rocket should resemble a closed umbrella. Lean the rocket pointing up against a twig or rock. Ignite a second match and hold it under the

head of your foil-enclosed match. In a moment, the rocket should fly. If it lights but doesn't move, try loosening or tightening the foil a bit.

You'll need the old-fashioned, blue-tip wooden matches for this one.

## 5. "Pea Shooters"

**Names:**

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Project Due: / /

**Key Thought:** God breathed life into us.

**Genesis 2:7** "...the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."

### **Discussion**

God is so good that He has provided for everything we need, including air. Our bodies need the oxygen that's in the air. God made it so plenty of oxygen surrounds the Earth so we can keep on breathing. Here's something else you can do with air.

Get a straw and a box of the cheapest little beans you can find at the supermarket. Cut stand-up targets out of paper plates. Set your targets and knock'em down with your peashooters.

## 6. "Play Army"

**Names:**

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Project Due: / /

**Key Thought:** God's people, his army, are to be known by their love.

**Joshua 5:14** "...as commander of the army of the LORD..."

**John 13:35** "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

### Discussion

The Bible says that God has an army. Today, God's army isn't to be known by its tanks, missiles, and guns; we're to be known by our love.

Get a cheap bag of plastic soldiers and tanks and play army. Talk about the battle between David and Goliath. Then talk about how Peter took a sword to a soldier and what Jesus said to Peter.

"Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) Jesus commanded Peter, 'Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?' ..."

John 18:10-11 (NIV)

## 7. "Sand Castles"

**Names:**

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Project Due: / /

**Key Thought:** We must follow God's Word.

Matthew 7:24-27 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock."

### Discussion

God teaches us that those who listen to and do the Word of God are like a man who builds his home on rock—it will survive a storm. Those who don't listen to and do the Word of God are like a man who builds his home on sand; the storm comes and will wipe out his home.

You don't have to live in Florida or California. In fact, you'd even score more points with this one if you live in Wisconsin and it's the middle of winter when you do it. Get a bag of sandbox sand from a local *Home Depot* or similar store. You can substitute with regular sand from a masonry supply firm. Put the sand in one of those little plastic swimming pools or a sandbox or a large tub. Add water and start building.

Build your castle while discussing what the scripture verses say in Matthew 7:24-27 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But

everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Help them clarify their thinking and then form a demonstration. Pour a little water on one of the walls of the castle; as this section dissolves, explain that this is what we’re like. If we build ourselves on the foundation of God’s Word, we will survive when hardship comes. If we don’t follow God’s Word, then when hard times come, we will crumble like this castle wall.

## 8. "Refrigerator Box"

**Names:**

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Project Due: /      /

**Key Thought:** Jesus has a place for us.

John 14:2 "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you."

### Discussion

Make a clubhouse out of the cardboard box from a refrigerator or washer machine. If you can't find one of these boxes, then go to a neighborhood supermarket and ask for as many boxes as they're willing to give to you. Cut up your boxes into panels and tape them together to form separate walls. Then build your clubhouse out of the walls.

Mention to your kids the fact that you're helping to prepare a clubhouse for them. As your building, talk about how Jesus said He was going to prepare a place for us. Discuss how one day we will go to be with Jesus forever. Talk about how beautiful Heaven will be and how there will be no more crying.

Be careful not to get too much into a topic of death. Keep your discussion more along the lines of Jesus love for us. Stay focused on the fact that Jesus wants us to be with Him always and that's why He has "prepared a place for us".

## 9. "Climb a Tree"

**Names:**

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Project Due: / /

**Key Thought:** All of us need Jesus.

John 15:1-5 "I am the true vine, and my parent is the gardener".

### **Discussion**

Climb a tree with your kids. While you're climbing the branches, ask them if they knew that they are branches. Use this opportunity to tell them what Jesus said about Him being the vine and us being the branches. Talk about how we need him for our very life and being. Illustrate this by discussing how the branches you're climbing on can't grow separate and apart from the tree itself. The nutrients come up through the roots, trunk, and then out to the branches. So it is with Jesus and us. We can't grow into the people God wants us to be unless we are close to Jesus.

## 10. "Paper Airplanes"

**Names:**

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Project Due: / /

**Key Thought:** Jesus is coming back!

Mark 13:26 "At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory".

**Acts 1:9-11** "After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight".

### **Discussion**

As you build and fly your paper airplanes, talk about how incredible flying is and transition to talking about the sky and the clouds. Let this lead to the idea that Jesus went up into the heavens and He will come back through the clouds. Reinforce the idea that He will come back to take to Heaven those who have followed Him.

## 11. "Build a Model"

**Names:**

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Project Due: / /

**Key Thought:** God has carefully created each one of us.

**Psalm 139:2-18** "You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are Your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you."

## **Discussion**

As you're building your model, talk about how carefully you and your child must add the parts.

Discuss how you focus your attention to the tiniest details. Mention how God formed us in the same way. He was careful with each detail and He concentrated on us. Actually, He's still thinking about us. God built us and He loves us greatly.

## 12. "Let's Make a Deal"

**Names:**

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Project Due: / /

**Key Thought:** Christ promises and delivers peace. The Devil promises treasure and delivers suffering.

**Joshua 24:13-15** "So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant."

### Discussion

For each child create three index cards with outings, gifts, candy, etc., listed on two of the cards. On the last card jot down a stinker gift like a pound of mud, five empty cans of soda, a bag full of leaves, etc.

Put a number on the backside of each card. Each kid is given a piece of candy to start. They have to decide to keep the candy or trade it for one of the numbered cards. If they choose a card, before they can look at it they are given a chance to trade it for another card. Let them know that one of the cards is worth a \$5.00 or a \$10.00 shopping spree at a toy store or whatever big ticket item you can create. Once a final selection has been made, they can look at their card. Talk about how all of us have choices. The cards in this game are like choices people can make in real life. Some people choose the wrong cards and they end up in trouble: drugs, sex, violence, etc. Others choose the right cards and they enjoy the good things God has to offer. The Bible says "choose today who you will serve".

## 13. "Sword Drill"

**Names:**

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Project Due: /      /

**Key Thought:** The Bible is our sword of defense and offense against the devil.

**Ephesians 6:17** "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

**Hebrews 4:12** "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

### Discussion

Here's a unique method and incentive for memorizing scripture. Take turns picking scripture verses with your kids till you have a list of ten or twenty verses. Type up all the verses onto a single sheet of paper. Give a copy of the paper to each child. The challenge is to see who can recite any of the verses when asked during the next week.

Here's how you play: Say it's morning and everyone is getting ready for school and work. You run over to one of your kids and yell SWORD DRILL!

Next, you give them the reference, e.g., John 3:16. If they know it, they have to recite it. If they don't know it, you must recite the verse and you win that Sword Drill.

Remember, a challenger must be able to recite the very verse they are challenging their opponent to recite.

If your child knows the verse, they recite it and then challenge you with a verse of their choice.

The game proceeds with challenges made back and forth between child and parent until someone misses. In the event of a tie when you and your children exhaust all verses, start over by selecting new passages.

You can also increase the stakes by having the loser of each Sword Drill pay up a quarter with each loss to the challenger.

Keep track of wins and losses. At the end of the week, the winner gets a hot fudge sundae or some prize that is typically enjoyed by all.

## 14. "Color a Picture"

**Names:**

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Project Due: /      /

**Key Thought:** God created each of us different to serve different purposes.

**Romans 12:4-8** "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others..."

### **Discussion**

Talk about all the different colors you can use when making your picture. Mention the fact that God made people of different colors. Finally, discuss Romans 12:4-8 and Corinthians 12:4-26.

Look at the descriptions outlining that God has given us different gifts and missions. Explain your gifts and abilities and how you fit into your congregation. Try to help your child find their gifts and abilities.

## 15. "Cloud Gazing"

**Names:**

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Project Due: /      /

**Key Thought:** God's greatness and His love for man.

**Psalm 8:3-4** "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?"

### **Discussion**

King David wrote this verse as he was lying on a hillside one night staring up into the heavens and contemplating God, His creation, and His greatness.

Lie in the grass with your kids and try to make pictures out of the clouds.

Remark about the beauty of the clouds and how they are an incredible creation.

Mention how important clouds and the rain they carry are to the Earth and to us.

Tell them about King David lying in the grass and looking into the heavens.

Help them to hear how great God is by creating an awe of His creation.

## 16. "Ride Bikes"

**Names:**

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Project Due: / /

**Key Thought:** God protects His people.

**Exodus 14:27-30** "Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived. But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore."

### **Discussion**

Talk about bikes and how they were a great idea. Tell them that back when the bicycle was invented we didn't have as many forms of transportation.

Then ask your kids to see how many different types of transportation they can remember. If they don't mention chariots, make sure you do.

Tell them about how God protected His people against Pharaoh when they crossed the Red Sea.

Remind them that Pharaoh's army was riding in chariots and had many weapons; but that didn't matter because God was fighting the battle for His people.

## 17. "Let Them Drive"

**Names:**

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Project Due: / /

**Key Thought:** God is in control of everything.

**Genesis 1:1-31** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth... (read the rest of the chapter)

### Discussion

Take your under-age kids out driving. Find a parking lot or seldom traveled roadway. Set them in your lap and let them steer. Talk about how the car is powerful and fast. Mention that even though the car is a complex machine, it does exactly what the driver tells it to do. Since they are the driver, they are in control.

Let that lead into how the universe is like a complicated machine also. However, all it's planets, creatures, and man, are under the watchful eye of Jehovah. He is in control of the universe. If He can handle the universe, He can handle any problem they might have.

## 18. "Road Surfing"

**Names:**

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Project Due: /      /

**Key Thought:** God gives us the power we need.

**Psalm 68:35** You are awesome, O God, in your sanctuary; the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people. Praise be to God!

### Discussion

You'll need a skateboard, a long rope, a helmet and knee and elbow pads for your kids.

Find a large empty parking lot or a seldom-used road.

Loop the rope around something on the back of your car so you end up with two lengths of rope trailing off your vehicle. These will be rope "handles".

Make sure you stretch the rope out as far as it will go.

Place the skateboard at the end of the ropes. Next, suit up one of your kids in their pads and helmet. Tell them to sit on the skateboard and hold a "handle" in each hand. Let them know you're going to pull them with your car.

If you spot another car when you're towing them, you'll signal with your blinker and horn which lets them know they should let go and veer off to the side.

Since the skateboard is so close to the ground, you won't have to go over five miles an hour and they'll feel like they're going 100 m.p.h.

When you're done "road surfing", discuss how the skateboard has no power on it's own. But, when you hook it up to the car—whoosh!

Tell them this is how it is with God and us. When we plug into Him, He gives us the power to make it through life.

**CAUTION: DO THIS PROJECT AT YOUR OWN RISK. IF YOUR SPOUSE WANTS TO KNOW WHERE YOU GOT THIS INSANE IDEA, IT WASN'T FROM ME.**

## **Eight Days, Dates, and Surprises Kids Love**

### **One on One**

The idea is that each child gets to pick what they want to do with you. Let them decide where the two of you will go together. If you think they'll pick an outing that's too expensive, let them pick from a pre-established list of activities. Here's a few suggestions: movies, ice-skating, roller skating, ice cream parlor, putt-putt, video arcade, playground, hike in the woods, shell collecting.

### **On the Job**

Let your kids take turns coming to work with you for a day. If a day is too long, then bring them home at lunch. Take them around to say "hello" to all of your associates. Let the kids see and experience what you do for a living. Have them help you with a few tasks. To top the day off, give them a paycheck for the work they accomplished.

### **What's for Eats?**

Most schools have a parents lunch day. If your school doesn't have such a day, ask if you could come to have lunch with your child. Let your child know you're coming or surprise them. Ask to meet their friends. Talk about the food and ask about their favorite dish. Finish your visit by presenting them with a surprise candy treat you just happened to have in your pocket.

## **Surprise! Surprise!**

I'm probably going to lose points with some parents on this one. Try to look at this through your kid's eyes. Arrive at your child's school at mid-morning. Ask to have your child released. When your child comes to the office, tell them you'll explain everything in the car. When you get to the car, announce that you woke up today and remembered it was "National (insert your child's name here) Day." That means you have no choice but to celebrate. Take them to the mall, play video games, buy them an ice-cream treat and go to the zoo or somewhere they enjoy.

## **It's in the Mail**

Send your kids post cards every so often; the cheesier the better. Buy those cheap drugstore type post cards and mail them to your kids every so often. Be sure to say something that will be funny and special just for that child. For instance, we live in Florida so I send those goofy vacation, "wish you were here" type cards. Then I write something nice about the child and how much I love them.

## **The Pillow Mystery**

While your child is sleeping, slip into their bedroom and put a love note and a little gift under their pillow. Don't sign the note. When they ask you if you did it, don't lie, just don't answer the question. Say something like, "Would I do that?" or "Why would I do that?" or "Ask your mom or dad".

Avoid their questions as long as possible. You should repeat this "pillow mystery" every few nights. Eventually, they'll pretend they're sleeping, just to catch the culprit. Let them catch you.

This is a really neat surprise.

## **Shoppin' & Hoppin'**

Take your daughter dress or make-up shopping. This is a great time and can be especially cheap since many girls actually like to shop at the Salvation Army these days. Let your daughter direct the entire outing. Basically, you're just going along for the ride. However, it will be special to her.

## **The Mad Shop Rush**

Whisk your child into the car and tell them it's an emergency. Once they're in the car and you're on your way, tell them you'll let them know what this is all about in just a little while. You should end up in the parking lot of a store like Toys R Us. Pull out a stopwatch and hand them a calculator and a \$20 bill. Announce that they have exactly 20 minutes to spend as much of the twenty dollars as possible. All change must be given back to you.

If you've come into a windfall lately, you may want to try this option. Everything is the same as in the first idea except you tell them they have exactly twenty minutes to fill one shopping cart with as much as they can.

If they go over twenty minutes, they must return one item for each minute over the limit.

## Summary

**1) By taking a deep look at my inner person, I can see a much better picture of my strengths and shortcomings. Thus, I am able to determine how I might begin improving myself and ultimately become a better parent.**

**2) By using some of the supplied projects and my own ideas, I have begun to layout a formal plan to better parenting.**

## CRITICAL BELIEF THREE: Becoming a Better Parent Demands PRACTICE

*The Bible warns very strongly that you are to obey your parents. The rod is considered old-fashioned in many homes. Psychiatrists say it will warp your personality. When I did something wrong as a boy, my mother warped part of me, but it wasn't my personality.*

*Billy Graham (1918-)  
American evangelist*

In "Critical Belief One", we worked on creating the mindset that active parenting must be more of a *priority* in our lives. In "Critical Belief Two", we took an inventory of our inner person and began laying *plans* for better parenting.

As we enter "Critical Belief Three", we'll further develop our plans making sure that our *right actions* are surrounded with *right attitudes*. This step is often the most difficult. Many of us are good at laying down *priorities*. Some are even better at producing detailed *plans* with every idea suitably arranged and labeled. However, for many of us, *practicing* those plans becomes a bit slippery.

We need to remember that a plan is just ink on paper until we *practice* the plan. All of us know that it's easier to make a plan than it is to accomplish the plan. Prioritizing and planning without practicing is about as useful as paint without a brush. A more pertinent analogy might be to go after a new job without the intention of ever working the job.

## Plans

“Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right.” Proverbs 20:11 (NIV)

“The sluggard’s craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work.” Proverbs 21:25 (NIV)

“Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men.” Proverbs 22:29 (NIV)

## Preparations

Let’s pretend you’re the boss. I’m a prospective employee. One day I get my resume together and submit it to your company. I attend an interview with you. We have a second interview. After a week or so, I get a call letting me know I got the job.

The first day of work arrives and I fire out of bed slapping off the alarm clock as I go. I’m at peak performance: shirt pressed, new slacks, power tie, shined shoes, haircut in place, 190% ready to rock and roll. Finishing off four minutes of toast and eggs, I guzzle down the last drops of O.J. With a final glance at the morning daily, I rush the 6-ounce glass to the counter. The kitchen stool violently jerks aside as I kick off toward the bathroom. Like an Olympic runner bursting out of the blocks, there’s definite energy in my stride this morning.

I enter the bathroom and grab my toothbrush. Jamming the bristles against my teeth, I scrub with the ferocity of a small tornado. Finishing the suds storm, I throw down my brush, walk over to the bed, stretch out, and promptly go to sleep. I repeat this scenario each day.

How long do you think it will be before I get a phone call from you looking for an explanation? What do you think your reply will be when I tell you that I’ve

been *planning* to come to work? Actually, I *plan* to come every day. I even go through the details of getting completely ready. Then, once I'm ready, I get into bed and go to sleep.

Now tell me why would I think my kids would be any different? They'd fire me too! Great plans with no actions are useless.

### **Prayer**

Father, you are the ultimate parent, and I have labored to be more like you and make my children more of a priority in my life. I've created practical plans and ideas to enable me to become closer to them. I'm asking now for strength to carry out those plans on a consistent basis. Help me to not be a "flash in the pan". Don't let me get their hopes up by suddenly jumping into the middle of their lives and then dash their joy by hopping back out and going my own way—without them. Change and rearrange me as much as You need in order that I might be visibly and consistently active with my children. Amen.

### **Ponderings**

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**TIP:** If I need quiet time, maybe I can take it late at night when the kids are in bed, or I could go to bed early and get up before the rest of the family rises.

## The Parent's 5-Minute Miracle

*"Dear Mom and Dad, Don't worry, God is under control."*

*Amber Mondell, age 7 (my daughter)  
Woe unto us if He ever gets out of control!*

I dragged in the house like a scorched and crazed desert wanderer. You know the picture: the sun-baked, cottonmouth, weary-eyed guy with a three-week beard and tattered clothing. He barely moves as he slithers on his belly through the blazing sand like some Mojave Gila Monster. Pulling himself to the crest of a dune and narrowing his bloody red eyes, he brings into focus a few luscious palm trees: *"Shade, water, comfort. . . ."*

That's how I felt and that's how my house looked to me that day as I drove down the street toward 1478 SE 2<sup>nd</sup>. An oasis, a refuge—was I glad to be home. It was the end to another blustering day of office combat..., which I had lost. The "War of the Worlds" had been exploding at my job all week and now, finally, it was Friday, 6:00 P.M. I was desperate; A quiet rest was all I wanted.

As I came through the door, the words fell out of my mouth,

"Hallelujah! I'm home!"

Then, just as quick, my refuge turned to rubble. There he stood—the *Terminator*. Between me and the comfort of my quiet evening stood *The Crash Master*. Yes sir buddy, the speed of light is a gentle evening stroll compared to him. I'm talking about Tim. Tim is one of my four kids. Tim is 11 and he doesn't have blood. He has Nitrous Oxide.

This is the same stuff they use in racecars that makes them break the sound barrier or something.

Anyway, Tim does everything at warp speed. If you remember *The Tasmanian Devil* cartoon character spinning around like a tiny tornado—that's Tim. He has no understanding of the words, quiet or slow. Tim didn't come with an off switch. My oasis . . . now a mirage.

He was a super ball bouncing off the walls at 200 m.p.h. His blond hair whipping around as he fired words at my face like a Vulcan cannon. (That's the machine gun that hangs on a F-16 fighter jet.) I had no idea about what he was yapping. All I knew was that I wasn't particularly interested in being a parent at the moment. I wasn't quite ready to talk Spiderman when I was still mentally tangled in the great web of the workplace. I just wanted to relax and forget the killers who live at my job. Tim had other ideas.

As I crashed down onto the couch, Tim made his final approach. Obviously, he had a better day than me judging by the sparks in his blue eyes and the vigor with which he spoke.

"Dad, I was helping out with our schools' morning announcements and they want me to do it every day!"

To me, this idea is a lot like having Robin Williams for your alarm clock. Anyway, as he spoke, I developed a plan. "Maybe, if I really make it look as if I'm paying close attention for a few minutes, he'll leave me alone and I can get on with passing out on my couch." It worked, ultimately. . . .

For five minutes, I really did place all of my concentration on Tim. My eyes never left his. I could tell this was an acceptable offering as he snuggled under my arm. Then, somewhere along, I quit trying to fake attention.

I'm talking about the kind of attention where you look at someone and say, "uh-huh" at all the right places

while you're *really* thinking about something else. That's what I stopped doing.

I was now delivering 100% consideration to every word Tim spoke. I didn't drift off thinking about work, the weekend ahead, or what I was going to do with the rest of the evening. I really thought about Tim and what he said to me. I focused on him as if there were not another person or thought in the world. That's when someone said, "abracadabra", and the magic show began.

I'd never seen this before. There was a splendid reaction in him; as if he knew, at that moment, he was truthfully the apple of his father's eye. Tim was more than genuinely happy; he was fulfilled . . . secure. This was astounding to me.

I carved a notch into the belt of good parenting that day, and I hardly tried. The whole thing lasted less than five minutes. What I learned was far more valuable than those few moments of "oasis" I had exchanged. *Voila!* I could fulfill my child's need for my attention in only a few moments.

I don't mean to say that all you have to do is spend five minutes a day with your kid and you'll be a great parent. Although, certain statistics say the average father spends three minutes a day with his children. I think we all agree that three or five minutes a day are not quite enough.

However, when you make a commitment to *fully concentrate* on your children *whenever* you're with them, you're raising your parenting average. It's the simple little signals we send that tell them we care: consistent eye contact, patting them on the back, holding their hands as you speak to them, etc.

My problem was I assumed every encounter that would really score with my children would require a huge investment of time and energy. I thought I had to be coaching my son's little league team, and spending countless hours helping my daughter with

homework. I thought it had to be big outings, special events, and exciting adventures to win the Emmy for Best parent.

My point is that I would tend to think *big*. Subconsciously, I thought “it” was only valid if I did it in a *big* way. I had to make a *big* splash. My tendency was to lose sight of the little things.

Most of the time our children only need a few minutes of our total devoted attention, just like that first day with Tim. Yes, they want to go to Disney World. They do want to go for a huge hot fudge sundae. They’d love to go shopping at Toys R Us, and we should do those things with them when we can. However, God has put it in them the desire for our *attention*.

Attention is not measured by *where* we take them or *what* we give them. Attention is measured in *HOWS*. It’s *HOW* we focus on our children when we’re with them that lets them know how important they are to us. They get a lot of miles out of the little moments when those little moments are focused on them.

## Plans

“Listen, my sons, to a parent’s instruction; pay attention and gain understanding.” Proverbs 4:1 (NIV)

“My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words.” Proverbs 4:20 (NIV)

## Preparations

When my child approaches me, how often do I stop what I’m doing, turn and look directly into their eyes giving them my focused and total attention?

Circle the correct answer.

**NEVER    SOMETIMES    OFTEN    USUALLY**  
**ALWAYS**

If we can train ourselves to keep our eyes on their eyes and our ears to their words for just five minutes, we will have taken a giant step to becoming better parents. There's no visible tool more powerful than the time we spend giving our children our complete, undivided attention. Write down your commitment to giving your children your *close* attention when they come to you.

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### **Prayer**

Father, please help me to be like you. I know that when I call you, you give me your complete attention. Please help me to do that when my children call me. I'm sorry for the times when my child needed my attention and I was somewhere else mentally. I want to be able to focus my total attention on my child for at least five minutes a day. Please remind me of this prayer the next time my child comes to me when I'm busy. Amen.

### **Ponderings**

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## 3 Essential Rules for Better Parenting

*I am not young enough to know everything.*

*James M. Barrie (1860-1937)  
British playwright*

The competition was walking all over his team as Gary flipped on the game and leaned back into his La-Z-Boy. In the kitchen, the sounds of clanging pots and running water signaled his wife was beginning Sunday dinner. The kids were in the family room arguing over who's turn it was on Nintendo; And Skip, the family's Golden Retriever, had decided to nap beneath Gary's dangling arm.

"He's got it . . . he's going, going, going . . . TOUCHDOWN!" Blasted the announcer.

"That's it. No way we're comin' back. We're history," thought Gary. He slammed the La-Z-Boy lever and the brown chair slid forward lowering its back. The surprise movement jolted Skip, and he instantly popped his head up scanning the room for an intruder.

Sensing safety, his head plopped down on his paws, and once more, his eyes drooped shut. If it had been two years ago, he would have nervously bolted to his feet in response to the sudden shift of the recliner. A couple of football seasons and hundreds of recliner jerks taught him that his master was just settling in for the "Sunday nap `n da chair".

With eyes shut, Gary listened to his team being pounded into the earth. The high-speed voices of the announcers were slowing down now as they muddled with the roaring fans, clanging pots, and rumbling children. Soon, he was only hearing a voice here and a pot there as he began slipping off.

Suddenly, a new player ran out onto the field. The player pulled off his helmet and asked Gary, "If you were in the NFL, how often do you think you would run onto the field without a game plan? And how 'bout the rules? You gotta' know the rules when you play the game buddy."

The stadium lights came on and Gary's eyes opened revealing a white stucco ceiling; but that's not what he was looking at. Gary was staring someplace past the ceiling and thinking,

"This whole parenting thing is like playing football. You have to have rules and a plan or you could walk out on the field and get yourself trampled to death."

Those of you with teenagers understand this concept of being "trampled to death". Part of this book is about developing a plan for parenting. However, just like in football, it's helpful if you have some rules for the game. No quality player ever runs loose doing whatever he feels like doing. He sticks to the plan and follows the rules. In the parenting game, it's good to have a plan and a few rules fastened to your mind as you execute your plays.

## **RULE 1**

Eye Level – I'm really interested in you.

Close your eyes and get this picture in your mind. Pretend you're standing in front of Michael Jordan, Patrick Ewing or whoever is a lot taller than you. Now pretend you're trying to have a discussion with him. Wouldn't you feel uncomfortable straining to look up at him. Maybe you'd feel a bit overshadowed. Wouldn't it be better if the two of you were eye level?

Gary was taller than everyone in his family. So, when he talked at length with his kids he tried to physically match their eye level. This was especially true when it was necessary to scold them. He didn't want to

create a fearful subconscious image of the big parent towering over them. He wanted to project openness to them. He wanted them to feel that he could be approached easily.

Generally, all he had to do is stoop or sit down to reach their eye level. He wasn't trying to be an armchair psychologist, but his homegrown method seemed to work.

He'd look into their eyes and try to stay fixed there until they broke eye contact. This let them know that dad was really listening and was genuinely interested.

## **RULE 2**

Involvement - I want to be with you.

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us . . ." John 1:14

He became as flesh and walked with us. He lived where we lived. He became a part of our world. Gary knew that this was the beauty of Christianity: Every other religion taught that man must attain the godhead, man must reach up to God. Christianity taught that God reached down to man. *He met us on our turf.*

Gary reasoned that he should take Christ's example. He would meet his kids on their turf. He would get involved with *their* world. He would do things with them that *they chose* and that *they liked* instead of making them get involved with what he wanted all the time.

Dad was going to join Boy Scouts or go to their ball games or take them to piano lessons or go clothes shopping. He would be a part of their life instead of making them become a part of his.

Gary thought that even if he attended church with his family each Sunday, it didn't take the place of

spending time with his children. He could no longer let mom drive the kids to all of their functions either. It didn't count if he just drove them and dropped them off where they were going. He was going to be involved *with* them. If he didn't attend his kid's functions with them, he'd have no reference for his children's experiences.

Therefore, he couldn't really relate to them in *their* world. The kids didn't put it in eloquent terms, but they did react to Gary's lack of attention in a very special way: They didn't have a relationship with Gary at their level. Gary felt sure that they thought he wasn't really interested. Were they right?

A parent's lack of involvement in their children's world leaves children starving for attention. It's that need for attention that forces so many kids to barge into the adult world.

Many times these are the children we mistake for being unruly little whiners. Actually, they've just learned that if they don't go through this badgering ritual, they won't get any attention. They'll be sent away to play with their friends or toys. They'll be told to watch a video. They'll have a deeper relationship with the baby sitter just because she gets down on their level and plays with them.

If we leave it up to our spouse to take the kids to all of their functions, they'll develop more of a deep relationship with our spouse and a superficial relationship with us. We need to keep a desire in our hearts to be involved with them. We have to do whatever is necessary to daily rekindle, and revisit this basic desire.

### **RULE 3**

Open Door Policy – *I'm always here for you.*

As Gary made a richer commitment to parenting, his children learned that they could call or come to his office any time, and they did.

At first people in Gary's office thought this was strange or even wrong. Some were amused. Some were annoyed. Eventually they respected Gary's decision. He now has this reputation around the office for being a really good parent. He's even had associates ask his advice on parenting. Of course, this has led to opportunities for him to share his faith. Gary found the whole thing amazing. All he did was let his kids get to him when they needed him. Actually, they didn't even show up or call all that often. They just needed to know that their dad is there for them.

How would we feel if when we called on Jesus He said, "*Not now, I'm busy?*" Our kids need to know that they can come to us whenever they need us; just as we need to know that we can come to our heavenly Father when we need Him.

## **Plans**

**"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them . . ."** Mark 10:14 (NIV)

## **Preparations**

What would happen if there were no stop signs? Obviously, we'd have a huge increase in accidents around the world. What would happen if there were no laws or rules to keep? I think it's safe to assume we would have anarchy. Laws and rules give people guidelines to follow for proper and beneficial behavior. Likewise, parents should set some guidelines for their own behavior.

### Prayer

God, help me discover your methods of parenting. From your methods, help me to create my own guidelines for parenting. Help me make rules for myself that will truly benefit my children. I want to be disciplined and consistent in my parenting efforts. Amen.

### Ponderings

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## The Parent and Their Anger: Aren't You Glad That God's Not You

*No man can think clearly when his fists are clenched.*

*George Jean Nathan (1882-1958)  
American critic*

### DATE #1

Gary jerked open the door and the Plymouth Voyager rocked as he charged into the driver's seat. He slammed the door and cranked the key in the ignition. With an intentional *too* much throttle, the engine roared to life and Gary jammed the van in reverse.

As they took off down the street, his wife thought that he resembled a huffing volcano, sputtering red-hot murmurs as they went. Hunching over the wheel was a snorting, scaly, fire-breathing dragon. An atomic bomb was at the helm, and no one had better drive too slow in front of him. The temper gauge registered boiling.

His wife was silent as he spun their van through the streets, bouncing off the curbs like a giant pinball, and driving in the exact manner in which he told his kids not to drive. As he rocketed past the 7-11, he shot the first round,

"Those kids have no consideration for anyone but themselves!"

The words ricocheted off the windshield smacking him in the face. His wife stared out the window. He reloaded and fired again,

"I work like an animal all week just waiting for our night out. When it finally gets here, I don't want to

spend it at home with our kids. I want to be alone with my wife. I married you, not them!”

All his blazing firepower was bouncing off the force field of ice surrounding his wife. Obviously, she was not engaging. As he prepared his next strategy, his wife turned to him and gently said,

“Please don’t devour my children.”

Gary figured he was reminding her of one of those lions or whatever creature it is in Africa that eats their young.

He was so excited about going out with his wife that night that he didn’t want anything to get in the way. Of course, his children weren’t too concerned about Gary getting his weekly “date ration”. Kids have their own important things: “Mom, can you help me with my homework,” “Dad, can I shoot the BB gun,” “Mom, would you iron my shirt,” “Dad, can you set up your computer so I can use the Internet?” Every time Gary was about to sail out the door, his kids constructed another Hoover Dam.

It was 6:45 P.M. and the movie started at 7:10 They were going to be late; Gary hated being late for the movies. His wife was saying something to one of the kids when he grabbed her by the arm, and in mid-sentence, dragged her out the door. At this point, he was ticked off at her for continuing to be the mother when he wanted her to be the wife. He was irritated with his children for helping to create this mess, and he was angry with himself for his loss of control.

Everything in his home would have been fine if he would have *helped* instead of *waiting* for his wife, however he was tired from solving problems and helping people all day at the office. He felt he was entitled to her attention now.

When he didn't get it, *how* and *when* he wanted, he started picking fights. He was subconsciously determined to make someone pay for his grief. Gary knew that was about as far as he could get from the mind of Christ.

Here's the final result to how Gary chose to handle things that day: Each of his children felt rejected by their dad. His wife was forced into a position of ignoring her children. Gary and his wife ended up arguing all the way to the movies. They were on time but Gary had to break the law to get them there by 7:10 P.M. He kept them miserable the whole night and overall he didn't set a Godly example.

Great date!

## **DATE #2**

Nothing has changed. Gary's children still demand attention. His wife still wants to be a mother. Every Thursday night Gary and his wife still go out on a date. Just about every Thursday night there are obstacles to their date. The difference in DATE #1 and DATE #2 is Gary.

Gary has learned that just as morals cannot be legislated; dates cannot be childproofed. There will always be things crying out for attention when Gary wants to do something else. Gary has to deal with obstacles properly, not with brute force.

**TIP: Pocket your pride and listen to your spouse. More than likely, they know a few things about parenting too!**

Now, when Gary and his wife are about to leave, Gary works to stay calm. As the children present needs, Gary tries to field them.

He doesn't leave his wife out there hanging. He gets involved, stays pleasant, and becomes part of the solution instead of part of the problem.

Gary's children have every right to their parents. They don't know when their parents will be back. They don't really understand how valuable this night is to Gary. They're not standing in the way intentionally. Each of them doesn't realize their siblings are asking for attention besides themselves. The best trick Gary has learned is to stop, take a deep breath, ask for Christ's help, and look at the entire situation through his children's eyes.

## Plans

A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly. Proverbs 14:29

. . . for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. James 1:20

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: . . . fits of rage, selfish ambition. . . Galatians 5:20

"fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged." Colossians 3:21 (NIV)

## Preparations

### The Anger Meter

Use one of the following words to answer each question below.

NEVER, SOMETIMES, OFTEN, USUALLY, ALWAYS

Do I handle my anger well?

\_\_\_\_\_

When I'm angry, does everyone else know?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do I hurt others when I'm angry?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do I remain angry for long periods of time?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do I seek revenge on those that anger me?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do I need to seek help for an anger problem?

\_\_\_\_\_

Does anyone complain about my anger?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do I have a constructive way to handle my anger?

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Am I angry?

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Do I like the results I get from others when I'm angry?

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How's it look? Are you a fairly mellow parent or do you need to "chill out" a bit?

### **Prayer**

Father, I don't always handle my anger according to your word. Sometimes I hurt my family. Sometimes I frighten my children. Sometimes I want vengeance, but you said that belongs to you. I need help controlling my anger. I don't want to damage my children's spirit. I don't want them to fear me. I know if you always displayed your anger with me, I'd run from you. I don't want my kids to run from me. I don't want to hurt others. Help me to control my temper. Help me do the positive things I must in order to keep my anger submitted to you. Amen

### **Ponderings**

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**Would you like to revise your definition of a parent?**

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## **The Parent and Their Discipline: *Parables and Paddles***

*"Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you."*

*Deuteronomy 8:5 (NIV)*

Gary was 26 years old when his daughter was four. She was his only child at the time, and her name was Sarah. One day, for whatever reason, Sarah was having a difficult time behaving. She started the day by emptying and spreading a box of 1000 rubber bands across the entire living room carpet. Gary told her to pick up the rubber bands. Sarah refused. For the next twenty minutes, Gary tried to get her to pick up those stringy rubber bands. Finally, he spanked her little behind, and Sarah picked up the rubber bands.

Gary's day started by waking up with the flu. Next, his car wouldn't start. Sarah's lack of interest in rubber band removal only stretched Gary's patience further. Now, completely aggravated and like a well-shaken can of soda, Gary was ready to explode.

Maybe he was running a bit hot because he was still green as a parent. New parents tend to think they should have total control of everything. Little kids have a way of undoing that notion. Maybe it was because he unwittingly compared the situation to his job; he couldn't command Sarah as he could his subordinates. And the battle raged on . . .

Later that night Gary went into Sarah's room to check on her. He looked down at his sleeping child and as he looked at her he heard a voice within himself say,

"You're angry with her aren't you?"

"Yes, I am."

“You’re angry, but would you throw her out onto the street?”

“No, no, absolutely not.”

“Many times you make me angry. Yet, I’ll never throw you out either.”

Gary learned something from his Savior that day: God doesn’t discipline because you angered Him. God disciplines because a rule has been broken. That discipline and that rule are both *based in love*. First, the rule was written out of love. It’s like this: perhaps one day I’m on my way out the door and I say to my young child,

“Don’t touch the stove.”

When I leave, my child places their hand on the stove. The stove is hot and they burn their hand. The rule was *don’t touch the stove*. The rule was based in love because I knew that my child could get hurt if they touched the stove. And, of course, I didn’t want them to get hurt. They opted not to trust me and they broke the rule.

Here’s another example. We understand that God intends sex to be for married couples. There are plenty of warnings in scripture concerning sexual immorality. However, God doesn’t get into a great deal of explanation as to why we should refrain.

Sometimes people say that sex before marriage is going to happen and it’s rude to think otherwise. They may adopt the idea that God is raining on their party, as if God gets some satisfaction out of ruining our fun by saying,

“No, you can’t do that.”

Let’s consider it from the Father’s perspective. If Jehovah is a God of love, than His rules must be born out of love, so, where’s the love quotient in the rule of no sex before marriage?

Can we suppose that God says no sex before marriage for a loving reason? How about this: If two unmarried people have sex, there's the threat of disease. Disease can destroy these very people God loves. Sex out of wedlock can produce a defenseless baby that no one wants. That child may be passed from one foster home to the next. It can lead to having the child killed in the womb.

Realistically, sex before marriage feels good and that's all. However, the possible ramifications of sex before marriage can be devastating.

Wouldn't it then stand to reason that God, out of love, wants to prevent the horrible pain and suffering that can be associated with this sin? Isn't this just like a parent saying, "Don't put your hand on the stove?"

## **Plans**

"And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his Father?" Hebrews 12:5-7 (NIV)

**"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline."**

Revelation 3:19 (NIV)

## **Preparations**

Here's an experiment. Every time you knowingly sin, try to see how God disciplines you. Look for the consequences to your sin, however they may come.

See if you can find the gentle but firm hand of a parent in the process. Does He destroy you? Does He write you off? Does He throw you out in the street? Is His discipline unjust?

Spend time with God regarding the issue of discipline. Take notice of how He parents you. The next time you discipline your child, listen and see if you hear your heavenly Father say,

“Is that how I do you?”

### **Prayer**

God, help me discover your methods of discipline. From your methods, help me to create my own methods of discipline. Help me to not discipline my children just because I’m angry with them. I want my discipline to be based in love. I want my kids to know that I don’t want to hurt them. I want them to know that I love them and want to help them. Amen.

### **Ponderings**

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**TIP: What do you do when you’re tired or pressed for time and your kids want to play?**

**Instead of sighing and reluctantly giving in, muster your energy and say, “Great idea!”**

**Give them your whole-hearted, attention for 10 minutes. Keep your eyes focused on theirs and respond enthusiastically to their requests.**

**It’s better for both of you to give them a super time for ten minutes than a bummer for thirty.**

## The Parent and Their Example: *Acting Like THE Parent*

*Example moves the world more than doctrine.*

Henry Miller (1891-1980)  
American author

The dictionary defines “parent” as an originator. In this way, the dictionary is referring to one who *first gives birth*. For example: Edison was the parent of the light bulb; He “originated” the concept and implementation of light captured in a glass orb. We are the parent of our children, but what are we the originator of *in* our children? What values, morals and goals are we placing in them?

Whether we are aware of it or not, we are definitely originating things *within* them. How? We have unbelievable influence *on* them. We’re the big people. Our kids feel safe with us because we’re bigger than they are.

We walk and speak with authority. We have answers to homework problems. We know how buildings are made and why airplanes fly.

We’re the ones that give them food. We perform all the mysterious functions that make the family car go. It’s simple, they look up to us because of our physical size and because of their need to look to someone for guidance, acceptance, protection and provision.

Besides all the physiological and psychological reasons why our kids look up to us—*God placed the need in them*. That need is what gives us, as parents, such influence on them. Their need is as a seed planted in the earth. Our influence is like the water pouring over that seed. If we’ve watered and nurtured them properly, they’ll grow properly.

Consider this illustration: A clear cup of water rests on a table. Someone places one drop of red food coloring into the cup of water. You see the red swirl begin to change the color of the water. Then another drop is added and the water deepens in color. If a few more drops are added, the water will be as red as blood. The water is your child. The red drops are your influence. Get the picture?

The only way we can influence or originate the *right* things *in* them is to make sure we are living the *right* things *before* them. We can't operate under one set of standards at work and then come home and function under another.

Since we spend more time at work than with our family, our standards and attitudes at work will creep over into our home. We'll create in our children some of who we are. Then the question is, are we pleased with who we are?

Becoming a better parent means more than just paying closer attention to our kids. It's bigger than just doing neat things with them. Great parents have to be great people. I don't mean great in the eyes of the world. We're not talking about the likes of Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln or Martin Luther King. I mean everyday folk living right.

The world needs men and women with scruples, people who believe in God, hard work and doing the right thing. These are the folks about whom nobody writes a book.

They don't necessarily work at changing the world. Instead, they change themselves and in most cases, unknowingly, they influence the people around them.

They're interested in being good people and doing what they're supposed to do. They don't spend much time questioning their role; They just do it. Their spirit, or call it their essence, flows out and into their children. They have a daily mission of simply serving their God the best they can. They meet with Him each day and they meditate on His book. These folks are the real thing. There's no faking it to make a good impression. They're not putting on a show, because as far as they know, no one's watching. Maybe no one else is watching—except their children.

### **Making it Practical**

"Actions speak louder than words." Gary grew up hearing that on a regular basis. Of course, that statement is true. He knew that what we do tells much more about us than what we say. The following is a list of easy, everyday actions that Gary developed to creatively teach Christian principles to his children.

### **Open the Door**

Gary learned the habit of opening the car door for his children *before* he opened the door for himself. By opening the door for his children first, he displayed a quick, real world example of servant hood.

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant . . ." Philipians 2:5-7

Gary was silently mentioning to his children that he preferred them. He was saying that he liked them. It was his desire to put them first. Of course, this only helped to build servant hood into their character.

## **Prayer Games**

Gary found a clever way to encourage his kids to pray at night. At bedtime, Gary told his kids he was thinking of a creature. It could be anything: a mammal, insect, fish, bird, etc. He told them the first letter of the creature's name. They could ask one question each turn and make a guess.

If they won, the reward was the opportunity to lead in prayer. If they didn't guess correctly, Gary led prayer. The next thing Gary tried was at the dinner table. Gary chose a number between one and ten. Whoever guessed the correct number would win and pray.

## **Hurry Hugs**

One day, without warning, Gary walked up to one of his kids and gave them a huge bear hug. Then he looked them in the eye, smiled, and walked away.

Over time, he'd repeat this with all of his children. He'd try to catch them by surprise, whenever they'd least expect him to come up and hug them. They'd run after him and say,

"Dad, what was that for?"

He'd turn, smile and say,

"Dad just loves you."

Somehow, this reminded Gary of Jesus walking the dusty streets of Jerusalem and spontaneously stopping to heal a blind man.

As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, 'Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.' He called out, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'

Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'

Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' 'Lord, I want to see,' he replied. Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you."

Luke 18:35-42 (NIV)

We may not think much of hugging. Many of us shy away from hugs because hugging makes us feel uncomfortable. Maybe no one hugged us when we were a kid. Whatever our reaction to hugs, we cannot escape the psychological fact that hugging makes children feel loved.

It doesn't turn boys into sissies. It delivers confidence, acceptance, and security to their soul. Hugging is good medicine.

### **Back Scratchers**

Gary's children love for him to scratch their backs at bedtime. He thinks it displays the gentleness of *the Father*. He's bringing them comfort and somehow that just seems like Jesus to Gary. Plus, often times it causes them to fall asleep!

This is a definite advantage on nights when Gary needs to quickly do the same.

### **Conversation Pieces**

Gary used to ask his kids,

"What did you do today?"

He always got the same answer,

"Nothing."

When he asked them,

“What did you learn in school today?”

He was enlightened with the usual,

“Nothing.”

Then Gary changed his strategy. At the dinner table, Gary asked one of the kids,

“Which period was the worst today?”

He asked another,

“What was the very first thing that happened at school today?” “Did anyone do anything stupid?”

These questions were like tinder to a fire. Specific questions out of the ordinary caught the kids off guard and drew them out of their shells. Later, Gary was able to work in questions that are more serious. He’d ask,

“Did you have a test today?”

If they said,

“Yes.”

he would ask,

“Was it hard?”

Then he’d ask them to tell him one of the hardest questions.

Gary wasn’t trying to get answers so much as he was trying to start conversation. What he really wanted to do was impress on them that he wasn’t trying to pry into their private lives; he was trying to show interest in them.

He wanted to make them feel comfortable so they instinctively knew they could come to him about anything, even the fact that they think their math teacher is stupid and they have a zit on their nose.

### **Phone Calls**

Gary made a rule for himself. Whenever he'd call home, he'd have a quick conversation with whoever picked up the phone. Then he'd ask them to get the person he was calling. He'd catch his kids off guard with this one. They'd expect the phone to be either their friends or a call for someone else.

However, it was dad. Now he'd have them on the line and they couldn't just run away.

He'd try to take advantage of these few moments by asking simple direct questions like,

"Did you see your friend Megan today?" "How was Megan?" "Did you and Chris get into another argument today?"

**TIP: How about putting the book down right now and telling your children that you love them.**

It may have only been a 60-second conversation, but it was still dad walking right into their life and saying,

“Here I am, I care, and I want to know about you, tell me how you’re doing.”

Again, this sort of thing reminded Gary of Christ. The Bible talked about how Jesus just walked up to people and initiated the opportunity to bless them. Gary liked knowing he was able to act like Christ in this same way.

### **Bedtime Stories**

If you haven’t read bedtime stories to your kids, you should start. Recently, Gary found out that Dr. Seuss is great for rap singing. It may seem ridiculous but he really did rap a Dr. Seuss book. It worked just fine.

Gary is no singer, and he certainly wasn’t a rap artist, but his kids thought it was fantastic fun. This will be one of those things his kids remind him about when he’s 70 years old when they’re all sitting around the Thanksgiving turkey.

### **Emphasize Their Strengths**

Gary heard a famous psychologist say that parents should try to catch their kids doing something *right* instead of always calling them on the carpet for something they did wrong.

The psychologist said if someone is always correcting me and hardly ever commending me, I become discouraged. On the other hand, when someone compliments me, I’m on top of the world.

Gary knew that many corporate managers have learned emphasizing an employee’s strengths and downplaying their weaknesses can result in a happier and more productive person. In many cases, the weaknesses begin to take care of themselves.

Certainly, this has to do with self-esteem. Gary thought,

“If a person feels better about himself, he tends to attack life with greater enthusiasm and joy. Children are no different. When their behavior is wrong, they are reminded, and if necessary, disciplined. When their behavior is correct, they’re commended.”

### **Prioritize the Hours**

Gary’s time for himself came after his kids went to bed. He structured his time this way so he could give the kids more attention. In the past he’d found that a great deal of grief was experienced when his children wanted him for something and he was too busy doing his own thing. He would say,

“Just a minute.” And 15 minutes later, after repeated requests, he was still caught up with whatever he was doing.

He felt the pressure of having to rush himself so he could get to his kids. At times, the frustration he felt in this scenario tempted him to resent his family. Then, he felt guilt for the presence of resentment in his heart.

The secret Gary discovered was to *change* the moment: he needed to rearrange his free time. The obvious solution was to hold off doing *his* things until his children went to bed. This worked fine for the younger kids because they were in bed by 8:30. The teens and Gary had to compromise a little more.

The other answer was for Gary to go to bed early, rising at 4:00 or 5:00 A.M. to work on his things before his kids woke. Either way, if he stayed disciplined, he was creating a way to keep himself available for his children.

## **Say the Words**

Like many guys, Gary found it difficult to say, "I love you." It just didn't seem like a manly thing to say. Really, it was because he didn't hear this much from his own dad. Gary was never quite affirmed in this way as a child. He grew up and never thought that those words were very important.

Then, one day, Gary heard a radio personality say that people, especially children, need verbal affirmation. The best verbal affirmation is to say, "I love you." This made sense to Gary because he liked to hear his wife tell him that she loved him. Why would his kids be any different?

Gary began to weave "I love you" into everyday phone calls and conversations with his kids:

"I'm just calling to tell you I love you." "Dad loves you, let's go for ice-cream." "I'm disciplining you because I love you. If I didn't love you, I wouldn't care what you did."

Sometimes Gary would just walk up to one of his kids, pick them up, kiss them on the cheek, and say, "I love you." Then he'd put them down and walk away. "I love you" was becoming part of Gary's vocabulary. Every now and then, he'd slip a note into his kid's shirt pocket, in their hand or on their pillow. The note simply said, "dad loves you!"

## **We Have the Power to End Arguments**

When Gary's children got into a fight with each other, they often came to him with tempers raging. By default, he was the referee. He hated this job. Many times, it showed.

He was working on something, just relaxing, or in the middle of a discussion with his wife and here they came . . . ,

“@#\$\$%^&, Dad! Billy said...”

First, they plowed in and completely disrupted his life. Second, Gary hated hearing the yelling; This stuff had the power to completely change his attitude from fine to foul.

When these arguments happened in the past, Gary would “kill” the bearer of the bad news and then go hunting for anyone else with a gripe. Everyone got shot. Of course, this never solved anything.

All he did was display his anger and make things worse. He wasn’t angry because his kids wouldn’t work out their differences, he wasn’t steaming because his children were lacking in servant hood, Gary was irritated because—they were disturbing him. The truth was that he needed to work on his own maturity. Patience was needed.

Now, Gary’s training himself to take a deep breath and whisper a quick prayer when the rumble’s approaching. As the young warriors arrive, he listens to each of them verbally massacre the other. When there’s a break in the battle, Gary speaks. However, the louder they are, the quieter Gary becomes. The more upset they get, the calmer he becomes.

He tries to display control, peace, and concern. He tells them,

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” Romans 12:18 (NIV)

This tactic doesn’t stop all wars; battles ensue, but Gary has found a way to slow them down. He’s demonstrating a healthier way to interact with conflict. Gary’s belief is that his children will remember this method when they get their turn in the parent seat.

Do it Now!

Sometimes Gary was forced to put off his kids needs till he could get to them. Many times, he wasn't forced, but it was more convenient to put them off till later. Gary's wife noticed that he was in one of those "convenience" modes once and said, "They need you *when* they need you, not later." OUCH! She was right. Gary needed to rethink the way he handled his children's interruptions.

He started keeping a close watch on his children's reactions to his attention. He found that if he came when they asked, it had a significant impact. If he put it off till later, it had, at best, 50% of the impact. These weren't scientific figures. He hadn't read some recently completed study by a host of doctoral geniuses. Gary just started taking careful notice of his kid's reactions.

Also, he found that most of the time their requests for his involvement would only take a few minutes. The fact was that sometimes it was just inconvenient—so was rain and flat tires.

Gary had to deal with their needs as soon as he possibly could. He didn't want to give his children the impression that their heavenly Father would ever "put them off."

How would it be if his kids grew up with the impression that when they prayed, God may or may not listen to them? What if they genuinely felt that God might help them only if He could find the time?

Remember, we're the face of God to our children. What they will learn of God's personality, His capacity for paying attention to them, and ultimately His love and acceptance of them is closely related to how we treat them. You're the parent that will illustrate *THE Parent* to your children.

## Smiles

In the mornings, when his kids got out of bed, one of the things Gary learned to do was to smile at them. He might be across the house but he would go out of his way to make sure they saw him smiling at them.

His desire was that one of the first things they experienced each day would be the smile of approval from their dad. He wanted his kids to know, through his smile, that their heavenly Father also smiled upon them.

Smiling at someone just seems to make him or her feel welcome. Isn't that something we want to impress upon our children—they're welcome in our lives?

## After Work

Gary got into the habit of playing with his kids each day for 10 minutes as soon as he came home from work. He found his children to be more talkative at dinner when he played with them beforehand. Plus, when Gary initiated playtime, they'd engage with much more enthusiasm than if they had to chase their dad to play with him.

Playing with his kids was just a vehicle; a conduit that carried the message that said, "dad loves you and really likes having you around".

When he played with them, he was drawing another picture of Jesus for his kids. Gary would smile as He sat down, reached over, and picked up a toy. He'd pat them on the head and begin to play just like another kid.

In this scene, again, Gary was demonstrating that Christ wants *everything* to do with them. Through his actions, Gary was showing that Christ was approachable and He *wants* their company.

So many self-esteem problems in children could be dissolved if this idea were experienced on a regular basis. The lesson his children learned was that Gary enjoys them. It also wrote an everlasting note to his children that said—*God* enjoys them.

### **Dinner Time**

The kids were getting older. The family was becoming busier. Getting everyone together in one place at one time was much more difficult than when the kids were younger.

Simple things like a family dinner were becoming more difficult to arrange. So, the answer was dinner happens at 5:30, if you intend on eating you better be there.

Gary found that as the family was maturing and everyone had schedules to keep, he had to *create* moments of togetherness on purpose. A regular dinnertime was one of the natural opportunities to spend time with the kids.

### **Dollar Devotions**

Gary knew that some of his friends and family felt that he was taking an extremely liberal risk. They thought he was suggesting an improper motivation to his children for having devotions.

Actually, Gary was being sneaky. He set a time for devotions with his kids. He told them that everyone who shows up for the 10-minute devotion would receive a dollar. This happened every night of the week. That was seven free dollars a week!

He explained to them that he wasn't paying them to have devotions. He was just using that time to give them a little money for spending and for them to have a chance to pray together.

They may have come only for the dollar, but they did hear the gospel.

Gary's thinking was that if you looked at the New Testament closely, you'd see that many times Jesus healed and fed people so He could gain opportunity to speak the words of life to them.

We must remember that whether or not we realize it, we are always influencing our children.

## Plans

**"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."**

John 13:15 (NIV)

**"Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you."** Phil 3:17 (NIV)

**"We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow."** 2 Thessalonians. 3:9 (NIV)

**TIP: Parents help to create memories within their children. What kind of memories am I placing in my kids' minds?**

## Preparations

Our kids know us. They know us because a part of us is in them. And that part is growing constantly under our influence.

Many of the problems in society: drug abuse, prostitution, alcoholism, physical abuse, sexual abuse, etc., are engaged in by people who a.) did not have a good relationship with their parents or b.) were influenced by their parent's own illegal, immoral behavior.

Just coming home from work, having dinner, and reading the paper, teaches our kids that in the morning a parent goes somewhere called work. When they come back from work, they eat and read the paper. That's it! What if our kids saw us reading the Bible all the time? What if they saw us feeding the poor, clothing the naked or just showing kindness to all that cross our path. Then what traits would we be originating in our children?

## Prayer

Father, help me to originate in my children quality traits like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. I already understand that my children will have a much more difficult time learning these qualities if I don't exhibit them. Lord, please continue nudging me toward deeper Christian living. And help me to be sensitive to my children. From time to time, let me see life through their eyes. I want to respond to them as you would. I know this would help them get to know you better and more easily as they get older. Help me to act as you would act. Amen.

## Ponderings

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## **The Parent and Their Prayer Life: *Quick Prayers for the Family***

*Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays.*

*Sören Kierkegaard (1813-1855)  
Danish philosopher*

Gary learned a few tricks that helped him achieve his responsibility to pray for his family. He found that he didn't always have to pray for an hour, and that prayer doesn't have to be hard labor in order for it to be effective.

Listen to Peter's prayer. "But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!' . . ." Matthew 14:30 (NIV)

Do you hear the simplicity in that prayer? True, Peter was in a desperate moment and a thirty-minute, perfectly phrased, and punctuated prayer wouldn't have been practical.

Have you ever found a place in the Bible that tells you a prayer must be lengthy or grammatically correct?

God just wants to hear from us. He wants to be a part of our parenting. He's already told us in numerous scriptures that He's concerned about every issue in our lives and the lives of our children.

Don't complicate things. There are times for lengthy prayers, but those times are not always. Just speak to God on behalf of your family.

### **The One-Minute Blessing**

Gary had always felt like he wasn't *really* praying unless he ceased all activity, got down on his knees, and wailed for 15 or 20 minutes. It took the

revelation of a sneeze to change his mind. One day at work, Gary sneezed and someone said, "God bless you." That lit the fuse . . . Gary thought, "When someone says, 'God bless you,' that's actually a prayer. They may not mean it as such, but it could be a prayer."

Of course, it's not a lengthy or deeply emotional prayer, but it is a prayer. We may say it nonchalantly, but we are in essence, asking God to bless someone.

Somewhere in time, someone must have decided to attach the opportunity to bless another, to the random act of sneezing. What a great idea!

Gary started a new campaign. While he was in his car, at the job, lunch, waiting on the phone, or wherever; He'd silently speak a quick blessing over his children. Gary would say something like, "Father, bless Joey. Let him sense your love right now. Thank you." After all, the parents in Biblical times spoke blessings over their children.

Gary also started creating some very special moments when suddenly, without announcement, he would come into his child's room, place his hand on their head and pray a short blessing over them.

They were never sure how to react. Gary was confident they would carry those moments in memory for the rest of their lives.

### **Extended Prayer**

Gary believed that there must be times when fathers go away to do battle for their families: not churning out a living in the workplace, but waging war in the heavens.

For years, Gary had a picture in his mind. The scene was dark. A father was coming toward the viewer of the picture. He was leaning, head first, into a sharp storm wind. Streaks of rain pelted his muscular frame.

He was under stress but his face was filled with bravery and determination. His wife stood behind him with their two children behind her. The father was obviously protecting them from the storm. He was taking the assault and absorbing it while his family was safe behind him. It was a beautiful illustration of Christ and what He has done for His beloved.

Gary thought that the picture portrayed many facets of being a husband and father. One of those facets was to periodically pray at length for his family.

In these times, he saw himself as the protector: a warrior doing spiritual battle for the sake of his family.

Every so often, on a Saturday, Gary would ask the pastor for permission to spend time alone in the sanctuary. If this weren't possible, he'd go to a forest or someplace where he wouldn't be disturbed. He'd take a notebook, pen, and Bible. When he got to his destination, he'd ask God to help him think.

He'd start by writing down every single need regarding his family. When he was sure he couldn't think of any more needs, he'd begin praying. He'd stay as long as he could, alone, with God, and the needs of his family.

Gary felt that one of the most important regular petitions he could place before God was to help him become the parent God intended him to be. Like a piece of raw iron in the hands of a master blacksmith, God was forging Gary to the exact shape He had in mind. Gary's job was to yield.

## Plans

“After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.”

Matthew 14:23-25 (NIV)

## Preparations

I must remember that I am to do many of the same things Jesus did on earth. He often went away alone to pray, then He returned to minister to the people.

The night He walked across the water to save the disciples from a storm, He had been up on a mountain praying all night. He had gone up the mountain at approximately 6:00 P.M. Between 3:00 and 4:00 A.M. He came down and walked out over the sea to the disciples.

## Prayer

Dear God, I certainly could pray more. It's hard. I can't see you and I don't hear you. Will you help me? My heart is right. I want to pray because I know I should. Yet, there's so much to do. Help me get it straight. Help me prioritize some time for prayer. Help me to remember that I don't always have to be on my knees for an hour. Remind me to carry on a conversation with you throughout my day. Thank you. Amen.

## Ponderings

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**Would you like to revise your definition of a parent?**

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**TIP: In raising children, Parents are actually creating a legacy for the future. How's my legacy?**

## **The Parent and Their Rest: *Even God Rested!***

*To do great work a man must be very idle as well as very industrious.*

*Samuel Butler (1835-1902)*

*“. . . so on the seventh day he rested . . .”* Genesis 2:2 (NIV)

While reading his bible, Gary came across Genesis 2:2 and wondered why God rested from His work? He thought,

“If God were tired, He wouldn’t be God. God can’t be tired. Becoming tired is a characteristic of a created being. Created beings must sleep. If we don’t sleep, our bodies can’t repair themselves and eventually we’ll die.

If God needed sleep, He wouldn’t be God because He would have a limitation. Having a limitation, any limitation, is not consistent with the nature and attributes of God. He is limitless, boundless, all-knowing, all-powerful and ever-present, or how else could He ever be God?

God does not require sleep. God does not require rest. So, why on the seventh day did He rest?”

After prayer, study, and careful thought, Gary learned his answer. The word “rest” used in Genesis 2:2 is not talking about sleeping. It doesn’t imply tiredness. The actual Hebrew word used for “rest” means to lay down one’s work. It means to cease labor. Then Gary wondered,

“If we know that God doesn’t tire, then is the reason he ceased from His labor because He was simply finished? Why even mention that God rested?”

It would have been sufficient to say ‘ . . . on the sixth day God finished his labor.’ Someone might say ‘ah yes, that’s true, but what did God do on the seventh day?’ The obvious answer would be—why create a seventh day?

Six days would have been sufficient if all that we were to do on this planet was labor. For that matter, why not five days, or nine? God created seven days and He, the Almighty, on the seventh day, ceased from His labor. He rested.

The question remained, why did the only limitless being in the universe decide to tell us that He rested?”

Gary concluded that God never asks us to do something that He hasn’t done Himself. Therefore, Gary also believed that God always sets the example. To Gary, that was why the Bible mentions God “rested”.

God didn’t *need* to rest for *His* sake, God rested for *our* sake. He was giving us an example: He labored and He rested. That was His plan for us.

Gary wondered how many parents were having difficulty finding time for real rest. All you had to do was pick up a newspaper and read the financial articles citing that two income families weren’t earning enough any more.

There were homes where dad and mom both had two jobs each. The only rest or ceasing of labor they got was when they were sleeping.

A few years ago, Gary realized a pattern in his marriage. Whenever time would allow, Gary and his wife would go out together. The problem was that they weren’t going out very much.

Their time alone together was diminishing. She was busy doing all the tasks associated with being a mother. Likewise, Gary was wrapped up in being a

provider and protector. However, he subtly started to resent his children. They were getting all of his wife's time.

She wasn't trying to neglect Gary; she was as kind and considerate as always, but both of them were so busy that they just didn't have any consistent time alone together anymore.

Gary remembered how when he was a kid his parents went out together every week. Then, a friend of Gary's who had five children told him that his wife and he always went out on Friday nights. It was mandatory. It took Gary six years to finally hear what his friend was saying.

He told his wife he needed to have consistent time alone with her. They settled on Thursday nights. Now, when Thursday night comes, if the kids are fighting, the beeper's going off, or the dog has a case of the hives . . . they're going out.

Whatever constituted "rest" and "ceasing of labor", for Gary, became part of his schedule. Physical, emotional, and intellectual rest is needed by every human being. Gary learned to make the time for rest.

Because Gary had a lot of kids, he also was well acquainted with the reason the name "kids" was chosen for children. The offspring of goats are called kids. They are notorious for running all over the place knocking things over and making messes.

They go wherever they want unless their goat parents stop them. Gary and his wife had many "kids". Those "kids" went all over the place.

They knocked things over and made messes unless their parents stopped them.

Kids are also like water. Water, without being in a container, goes everywhere. It flows wherever it wants unless somehow, something stops it.

At night, Gary's bedroom door was what stopped the water. Gary figured that some people would see this as being harsh. Most of those folks didn't have kids or didn't have as many as Gary did. They certainly didn't understand this "water" concept either.

Quiet, peaceful rest was imperative. That's not to say there weren't valid times when Gary's children needed him after he went to bed. At those times, Gary met their needs. It was more about Gary disciplining himself to get into bed at a reasonable hour to get the rest he needed.

## Plans

"Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; . . ." Psalm 37:7 (NIV)

## Preparations

Every now and then Gary would ask himself the following questions. He called it the "Rest of the Day" Survey.

How much sleep do I get?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do my wife and I have regular time alone?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do I have regular alone time?

\_\_\_\_\_

What do I do for relaxation?

\_\_\_\_\_

How often do I do it?

\_\_\_\_\_

Am I stressed out a lot?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do I feel rested most of the time?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do I take breaks from my work or do I just keep going?

\_\_\_\_\_

Does anyone ever call me a workaholic?

\_\_\_\_\_

When's the last time I took a real vacation?

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There isn't a scoring table for this one. You know how you rate. One word of encouragement: please rest, a tired mom or dad makes mistakes.

### **Prayer**

God, when I'm weary, *help me to rest.*

When my troubles are many, *help me to rest.*

When I'm focused too much on work, *help me to rest.*

When I am depressed, *help me to rest.*

When the job is too large, *help me to rest.*

When I feel alone and misunderstood, *help me to rest.*

When my body is pained, *help me to rest.*

When I don't have the answers, *help me to rest.*

When fear blinds my eyes to You, *help me to rest.*

And when I have finally rested, God, help me to see You . . . anew.

### **Ponderings**

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## Five Extra Tools

Along his quest to better parenting, Gary devised a number of “tools” to help him stay on track. Here are some of those tools.

### Prayer Reminder

Gary visited a craft store and purchased a strand of leather and enough beads to represent the number of family members in his home. He strung the beads onto the leather and tied the leather around his wrist. In essence, he created a small wristband. Sometimes he wore it on his wrist or just kept it in his pocket. The beads acted as a visual cue to pray for each of his family members.

### Carry Around Prayer List

Gary typed up a list of things to pray about for each family member. He had the list laminated and he carried it in his wallet, shirt or pants pocket.

### Let Your Fingers Do the Praying

Here’s an unusual method Gary developed to help him remember to pray for his wife and kids. He assigned one finger on his left hand to represent each person in his family. His left thumb was his wife. His index finger was his oldest child and the last three fingers represented each of his other children.

In his car on the way home from work, he’d wrap all of his fingers on his left hand around his thumb, which represented his wife. He’d then say a short prayer for her.

Next, he’d wrap all his fingers (the whole family) around his index finger, which represented his daughter. He’d intercede for her. Gary would continue in this fashion until he’d prayed for everyone.

Not only did this help him remember to pray but also it made things easier when he came through the door at the end of the day.

He used to think about the job while driving home. He'd be trying to figure out leftover problems of the day or be planning the next day's workload.

That was a trap. It was time for work to be over and for home life to begin. In a sense, this was a little like work: if he walked into a meeting without preparing his mind, he'd have difficulty pulling off the meeting.

If he walked in the house with work on his mind, he wasn't truly ready for his family. On the other hand, if he primed his mind with prayer and made himself ready for his family, he'd already be tuned in to them when he made his entrance.

This was hard. He enjoyed thinking about work. Therefore, he needed a little discipline to make this tactic successful. He had to practice. He was a better parent and husband when he first removed his mind from the workplace and prepared himself for the family.

### **Projects Card Deck**

Gary typed up each project in The Busy Parent onto a separate card and had them laminated. At appropriate times, he had his kids "pick a card". The card they chose would be the activity they would do together.

### **Family Coloring Book**

Gary chose favorite pictures of family members. He took them to a place that made copies and asked them to copy the pictures as large as possible. He wanted plain black and white copies with as little gray scale tints as possible. The ideal result was to capture just the outlines of features; This simulated a coloring book.

When he was pleased with the outcome, he made as many copies of each collection of photos as family members. Then, he stapled them into separate booklets. Gary now had a coloring book for each family member.

He took the books home and announced a coloring contest complete with a prize for best picture. As they were coloring, they talked about the events surrounding each picture. This made for great family discussion time.

### **Summary**

1) I've looked deeper into changing some of my motives, mind-sets, and attitudes. By doing so, I'm re-shaping myself to be a better parent.

2) I've continued to add ideas to my plan for better parenting.

### **IMPORTANT**

Before you move on to *The Parent's Pledge* and the final *Definition of a Parent*, consider this last question.

When your children are adults, what three things will they remember most about you?

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## The Parent's Pledge

I'd like to suggest that when you sign the following pledge, you do so with someone as a witness who will hold you accountable. You may want to include this pledge along with your final definition of a parent.

As a Christian who wants to become a better parent, I pledge to make being a better parent a **PRIORITY** in my life. I have developed and will follow a practical **PLAN** that shows my kids I love them. I will **PRACTICE** my plan with the same or greater level of effort, concern, and passion that I apply to my career.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Definition of a Parent (You)

As you can see, I haven't written a definition of a parent. That's your task. Throughout the book, I've simply pointed out some things you and I should think about as parents. I've given us many opportunities to revise our definition. In the following space, write your final definition of you as a parent.

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I suggest that you type and frame your definition. You may want to place a copy of your definition next to pictures of your children.

Dear mom or dad,

As we've come to the end of our book, I'd like to congratulate you on caring enough about being a good parent that you've taken your precious time and spent it reading a book about parenting. This certainly isn't the best book on parenting that has ever been written, and it's definitely not the best book that's been written, but thank you for spending your time with it.

Now, let's close our time together with a simple prayer for ourselves as Christian parents...

God, help us to be a parent...like You...for our children's sake. Amen.

This book written by Donald M. Mondell, founder & president SoulCare Research, LLC., [www.SoulCareResearch.com](http://www.SoulCareResearch.com) developers of Christian Counselor Rx [www.ChristianCounselorRx.com](http://www.ChristianCounselorRx.com)

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