EPHESIANS *'ESSENTIALS'* PARENTING GUIDE



A BIBLICAL APPROACH TO *Successful Parenting*

Partnering with
Morningstar Christian Fellowship

Dave & Linda Halse
Relationship Support Ministries

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FOREWORD

This Parenting Guide is different – different because it begins with the words of the Bible. In other words, we are not beginning with our own human experience or understandings, but with the authority of God's word. We first read the words of Scripture, starting with verse 1 of the book of Ephesians and ending with the last verse of the last chapter. We explore the verses in terms of their content, their meaning, and their application in the context of Christian parenting. Truly, successful parenting is certain if we **read and apply** the word of God as it is written and as He speaks to us through it.

God is our Creator and every child is created in His image and likeness. In knowing the Creator through Scripture, we then will know the nature of our children. In being loved by, and in loving the Creator, we are empowered to love and to guide our children with His perfect love.

The world in which our children live and grow and in which we seek to parent them is more different and dangerous than we could have imagined even a decade ago. In the book of Ephesians, we are told by the Holy Spirit through Paul,

> *"This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the devil and all his angels. Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over…you'll still be on your feet."* —*Ephesians 6:12,13 The Message*

Our message to Christian parents is this – loving God, building your marriage, and parenting your children are the most important and challenging priorities in your life on earth. The enemy is opposed to you and is determined to destroy the work of God in your home. God is greater! He will lead us in victory if we will fight for our family in the power of His word and His Spirit.

May our children and their children be truly blessed as we parent (and grand-parent) successfully, in Christ.

—Dave & Linda Halse

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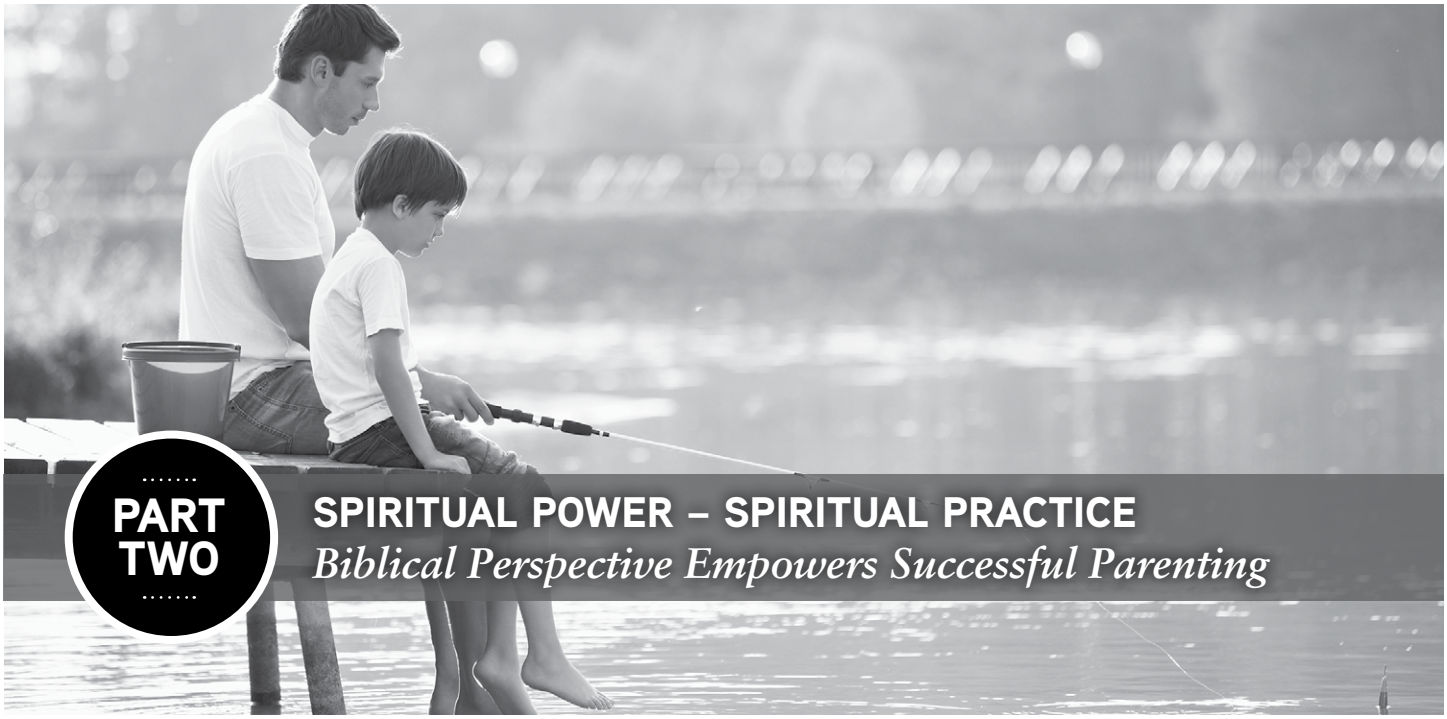
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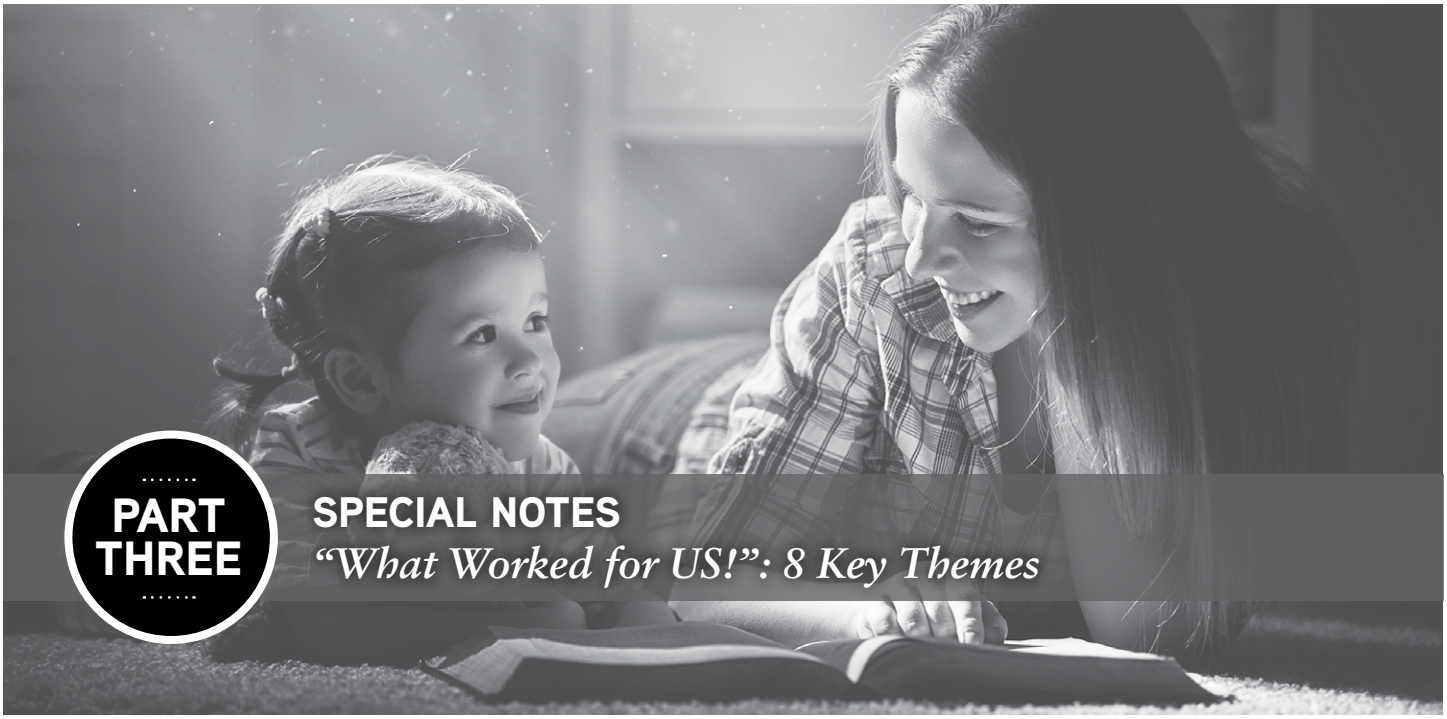
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INTRODUCTION



THINK ABOUT IT: When a couple decides it's time to start a family, where do they go to learn what they need to know how to parent successfully?

- The family they grew up in?
- TV, magazines, internet?
- Friends and family members?
- They make it up as they go?

1. WHAT ABOUT YOU?

Where are you getting your understanding of successful parenting? How is it working for you?

FOUNDATION – Successful parenting is built on a ***biblical*** foundation. This Parenting Guide is built on a **biblical understanding of God - who He is, and what He wants.** Many parenting programs today are focused on the child. Our Parenting Guide is focused on God. He made each child in His image and likeness. By knowing the Creator, we know His creations, our children.

God	Parents	Child
Who He is	Who we are	Who he or she is
What He wants	What we want	What he or she wants

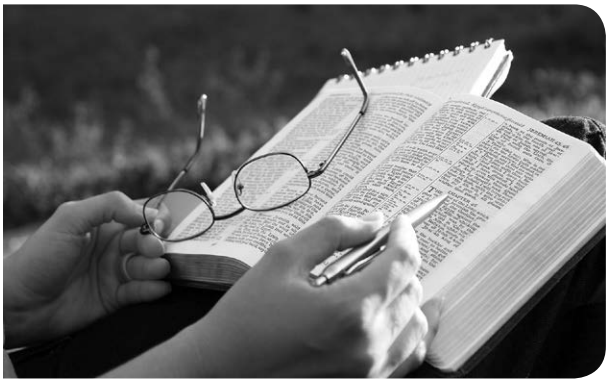
Successful parenting begins with God,
flows through parents, and shapes our children's lives.

IN CHRIST – "FOR IT IS BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED, THROUGH FAITH…" Eph. 2:8 - In Christ, a person is saved and born again by grace through faith in Christ. Since we are born again by His Spirit, the power of His Spirit in us brings the word of God alive to guide our parenting.

SUCCESSFUL PARENTING – as parents, we need to learn and live by biblical truths in our own personal lives and marriages. Our own obedience to biblical truth opens the way to the blessing and power of God's Spirit working in our families. In our obedience to God through His word and Spirit, we are empowered to build our family on the bedrock of parenting God's way.

EPHESIANS 'ESSENTIALS' – Our Parenting Guide is drawn from the book of Ephesians. We will use Scripture from other places in the Bible, but Ephesians is our home base for learning God's parenting principles. We call these principles 'Essentials' because they are necessary in creating successful parent - child relationships. We will be discovering Ephesians 'Essentials' passage by passage. An added bonus is the blessing of reading and working through a book of the Bible.

EPHESIANS is an extended letter (epistle) written by Paul to the church in Ephesus.



WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT PAUL:

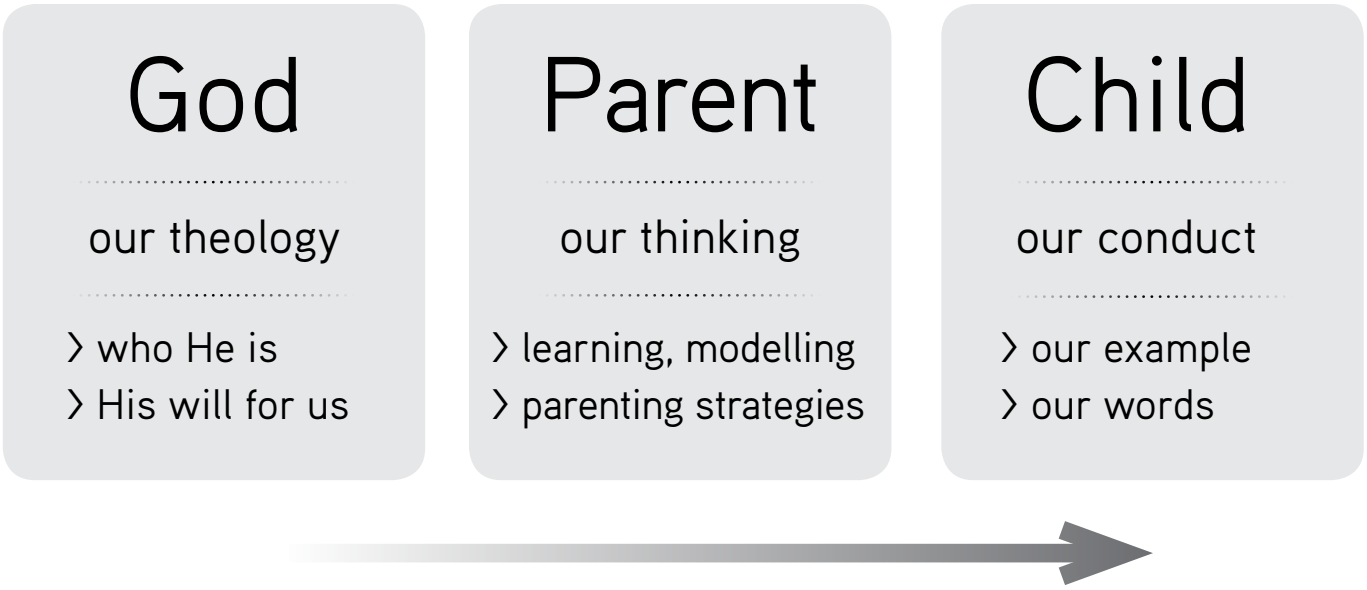
- he began life as Saul, a Jew and a Pharisee; before conversion he persecuted Christians
- confronted by Jesus in a vision and dramatically converted in Acts 9, called Paul in Acts 13
- called to evangelize and disciple Gentile believers beyond Jerusalem, established churches
- wrote Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and possibly Hebrews.
- his calling and mission - to teach, encourage, and build up God's family in matters of faith, belief, and Christian living.

2. Can you think of parenting principles you have already learned from Paul's teaching?

EPHESIANS – THE BREAKDOWN

Paul wrote Ephesians in two halves. In the first three chapters, he teaches the doctrine of salvation and important beliefs we hold as Christians. In the second half of the book he teaches details of how we are to conduct our lives as Christians, especially in our relationships.

For our Parenting Guide purposes, we are looking at the book with 3 themes in our mind: 1) our **theology** (knowledge of God), 2) how we should think and act as **models** for our children, 3) how we should **interact** with our children based on our reading of Scripture.



Successful parenting begins with God, flows through parents, and shapes our children's lives.



PART ONE

SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE – SPIRITUAL POWER

A Biblical Perspective is Blessed with God's POWER!

ESSENTIAL #1: EPHESIANS 1:1-2

The First Thing You Should Know About Parenting is WHO YOU ARE, in Christ

The Big Deal About Your Identity, Authority, and Holiness

...RIGHTS. It seems that everywhere we look today there is some new group demanding their rights be met. We honour the rights of children and human rights, but what about God's rights? And what are your rights as parents to raise your family according to God's rights?

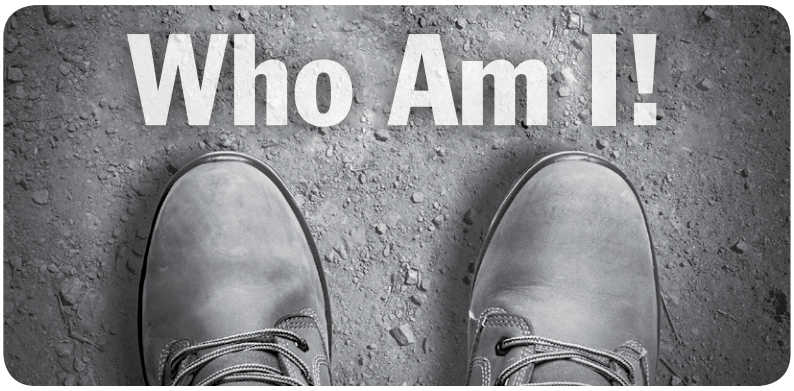
In Essential #1, in considering the first two verses of Ephesians, we get started on the right foot by taking the bold parenting step - to establish our rights as God's representatives in our homes.

"I Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: [2] Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Fill in the blanks.

"I _____, an _____ of Christ Jesus by the _____ of God.

The Holy Spirit is speaking to believers through Paul. Paul begins the letter with his **identity**. Paul introduces himself in 2 key ways:
1) his *identity* in Christ
2) his *authority* in Christ



THIS IS IMPORTANT. By declaring his identity and his authority, Paul models for us:
1) **Leadership** - he is sure of his identity 2) **Authority** – he is sure of what he says

John Eldredge's latest book is called ***Moving Mountains: Praying with Passion, Confidence, and Authority.*** In a chapter called "Bold Authority," Eldredge states that when we pray "in Jesus' name" we are using "the **authority** of the ruler of all the galaxies and realms to enforce the power of what we have just prayed…as we look deeper into the spiritual realm, we discover that the whole thing runs on authority." (Page 57)

AUTHORITY AND SUBMISSION IN THE HOME

As we consider the essential idea of authority in the home, it's important to think ahead to Ephesians 5:21 where Paul teaches us to *"submit to one another out of reverence to Christ."*

In verses 22 and 23 he writes, ***"Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife…as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior."*** Then in verse 25 he writes, ***"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her."***

God's design for the home is based on authority and submission. In marriage and family, God designed us for success within a family structure in which we thrive in our identities and roles.

1. As parents, have you thought about the importance of your **identity** and **authority** <u>in Christ</u>**?**
Do you believe that you are God's authority in the home?



PARENTING PITFALL

Many parents today do not see themselves (their identity) as the godly authority figure in their children's lives. Families are becoming overly child-centered. Children need their parents to be their loving authority.



KEY IDEA: How we DEFINE or SEE ourselves as parents determines our results!

SPECIAL NOTE TO BLENDED FAMILIES: The principle of authority in the home must operate well in the blended family too. Integrating a new father or mother into a family is difficult. Special attention to, and care in, establishing biblical lines of authority in a blended family are crucial to the long-term success in that family unit. New patterns of parental leadership are essential.

Children thrive in an environment of certainty and structure - loving, caring, firm authority.

EMBEDDED THINKING PATTERNS – SOWING AND REAPING

Our thinking and actions are based on a **premise**. The premise we hold to and trust in determines our thinking and behaviour. We also call this our "mindset." The biblical word is "stronghold." (2 Cor. 10:5) Our **premise** guides our actions and ultimately the results we get in life.

Think about this. What about you, what is your ***premise*** about who you are in Christ?

Do you see yourself as Paul saw himself? Do you operate in a way that shows that you know your identity in Christ and you possess the ***authority*** in Him to parent your children?

The power of the Holy Spirit is available to every Christian. As a parent in Christ, we can have the power of the Spirit and claim our identity and authority in Christ as we lead our family.



We parent with the premise that we possess the presence and power of God!

2. Is this idea new to you or have you always known you have God's identity and authority as a parent in Christ? How will this knowledge help you parent successfully?

HOLY AND FAITHFUL – Paul addresses the Ephesian believers: ***"to God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:"***

"Holy" - God calls us "holy" people who are the "faithful in Christ Jesus." **"Holy"** means to be set apart, to be kept whole, not to be transgressed or violated. God is holy, He is whole and His nature cannot be transgressed, violated, or affected by sin.



Whatever we do in life, parenting included, we begin with the truth that we are ***holy*** (whole persons) in God's sight because of our ***faithfulness*** in Christ.

3. We are holy or whole in Christ. Why is this important as you lead your family?

Verse 2 - Grace and Peace

"Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Paul extends "grace and peace" to the Ephesians. Where do grace and peace come from?

"Grace and peace to you from _____ and _____."

Do you need grace and peace to parent successfully? _____

Yes, we need grace and peace to parent successfully! When we need to show grace to each other, and restore peace, God supplies His grace and peace to us in all our parenting moments.



AS A PARENT...about your identity, authority, holiness, grace and peace, in Christ?

"One of the most important lessons we learned as parents was that our identity and authority from God were necessary in raising our children well." —Dave & Linda Halse

MY PRAYER: "Father, thank You for _____

_____ Amen.

ESSENTIAL #2: EPHESIANS 1:3-23

God's Supply of Spiritual Blessings is **Already** Yours in Christ

Your Heavenly Bank Account is Full

Remember, the first half of Ephesians is all about **theology**. 'Theos' is the Greek word for God.

Theology is the study of the nature of God and of his relation to the world and to our lives.

WHY do we need a personal theology to parent successfully?



To parent successfully we don't need to be theologians but we do need a **personal biblical understanding of who** God is and **what He is doing** for us in Christ.

Is it possible? Are there Christians who believe in God but don't have an accurate biblical understanding of who He is? What are your thoughts about this?

PROBLEM: In his book ***Abba's Child***, Brennan Manning says we **project our own self-concept onto God.** We 'see' God the way we 'see' ourselves. We make the mistake of thinking of God the way we think of ourselves. If I see myself as weak, I see God the same way. If I am unhappy, I see God as unhappy. If I am angry, I see God as angry. If I am powerless, I see God as powerless. I transfer my self-limitation to God and limit Him. D**oes this make sense to you?**

We need a right understanding of God to connect with His power in our parenting. We need right biblical theology to inform and direct our thinking and actions as parents.

My Personal Theology – what is it? Do I have one?

My personal theology is how I see God in my life - who He is, what He does, how He is involved in my life moment by moment. ***Are we sure about who God is and what He is doing for us?***

Our **Personal Theology** is our access card to our heavenly bank account.



PARENTING PITFALL

Many parents think a parenting course is just about learning 'how to' raise children. No! The most important thing is our active, ongoing spiritual and emotional growth as fathers and mothers.

1. Do you agree or disagree that we need a personal theology as parents? Why?

2. How much is God involved in my parenting and my family life? Circle one of these.
A) Not involved very much B) Involved sometimes C) Involved every moment
Explain why you chose A, B, or C.

The authors of this guide know from personal experience that God is with us and involved in every moment and every situation we face as parents.

Verses 3-10 – ***Spiritual Blessings in Christ, our Heavenly bank account is FULL!***

In our personal theology, we want to be aware of the blessings of our Father through Christ so that our hearts and minds will be ***filled and overflowing*** with blessings ***for our children.***

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love 5 He predestined us for adoption to son-ship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that He lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ."

As we think through these verses what does it all mean for us as we parent our children?



Fill in the blanks.

v. 3 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has _____ us in the _____ with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

v. 4 For He _____ us in Him before...to be _____ and _____ in His sight.

v. 5 In love He predestined us for adoption to _____ through Jesus Christ, His will...

v. 6 to the praise of His glorious _____ , which He has _____ given us in the One...

v. 7 & 8 In Him we have _____ through His blood, _____ of sins...riches of God's _____ that He _____ on us. With all _____ and _____

v. 9 & 10 He made _____ to us the _____ of His will which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their _____ – to bring _____ to all things in _____ and on _____ under Christ."

3. If my Personal Theology includes these spiritual blessings, how will it help my parenting as a Christian? Will these blessings flow through me to my family?

_____

_____

BE MINDFUL: ***These Spiritual Blessings in Christ empower successful parenting.***

Chosen	*Son-ship*	*Grace*
Redemption	*Forgiveness*	*Wisdom*
Understanding	*His Will Made Known*	*Unity Under Christ*

If we **embrace** these heavenly blessings from our Father, our spiritual bank account will **overflow** to our children. We are equipped for successful parenting in our **blessings in Christ.**

4. Am I aware of, and am I receiving and enjoying, my spiritual blessings in Christ? Why or why not?

There's more...Verses 11-14 – ***Our spiritual bank account is SECURE!***

11 "In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of His glory."

Spend a moment and take note of the key ***underlined*** words in these verses. WOW!

v. 11	**We are...**	**...according to**	**...in conformity with**
	Chosen	*His Plan*	*His Will*

v. 12 We who put our **hope** in Christ are the **praise** of His **glory**

Fill in the blanks.

v. 13-14 "When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

who is a _____ guaranteeing our _____ until the

_____ of those who are God's possession – to the praise of His glory."

5. Do these verses give you a strong sense of **security**? No matter what happens, God has us securely in His hand. When we know this, we parent with confidence. Do you agree? Write your thoughts about this:

_____

_____



APPLICATION: As parents, ***when*** will we need to draw from our spiritual bank account? We can apply a personal theology based in Ephesians in these challenging parenting times.

- your baby can't stop crying at night and you need to get up for work in the morning
- your sweet, little toddler is misbehaving and you need to discipline him/her
- your son or daughter is being bullied, or being a bully at school
- your children are fighting with each other all the time and you don't know what to do
- you need to have the sex talk with your pre-teen son or daughter
- your teen becomes romantically involved
- your teen son or daughter decides going to church is not 'cool' anymore
- you are faced with the spirit of rebellion in one of your kids
- your university son or daughter is questioning their faith
- you are experiencing conflict in your marriage
- your adult son or daughter is no longer living for Christ

Verses 15-22 – Paul's Prayer for God's People

15 "For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people, 19 and His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength 20 He exerted when He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age

but also in the one to come. [22] And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, [23] which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way."

Pray	giving thanks for you…the spirit of wisdom and revelation, know Him better…eyes of your heart enlightened…know the hope, riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people
Power	incomparably great power…the mighty strength…He raised Christ from the dead…at His right hand…far above all rule and authority, power and dominion
Placed	all things under His feet…head over **everything for the church, His body**…the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way



ESSENTIAL #2

What have you learned?

AS A PARENT…is your spiritual bank account FULL? Does your **Personal Theology** include?

- a truly biblical view of God?
- are you mindful of all your spiritual blessings in Christ?
- are you mindful of the security you have in the promised Holy Spirit?
- are you mindful that you are included in His plan and purpose?
- have you received the spirit of wisdom and revelation to know Him better?
- Do you have His incomparably great power that raised Jesus from the dead?
- Do you know you are placed under His feet and you are filled with the fullness of Christ?

"Many times we have faced challenges too big for us. God's spiritual blessings in Christ gave us the confidence to persevere. God has amazingly blessed our family." —Dave & Linda Halse

MY PRAYER: "Father, thank You for _____

_____

_____ Amen.

ESSENTIAL #3: EPHESIANS 2:1-10

What is Your Current **Spiritual** Address, in Christ?

Seated with Christ in the Heavenly Realms, RIGHT NOW!



An artist has imagined heaven to look like this. If the heavenly realms are anything like this, we're living ***spiritually*** in a home much different than the one we live in here on earth. If we are ***"seated with Christ"*** our parenting resources are **RICH** beyond our earthly understanding.

Paul, in this second chapter of his epistle, continues his theology lessons to the Ephesians, and to us. The focus of this chapter is **where we were**, and **where we are now**. The chapter begins with ***"As for you"*** and moves through a description of our journey from death to life, in Christ. We learn how God saved us from where we were, and how He sees us now, seated with Christ.

In Essential #3 we get to see the mercy of God's response to us, without Christ. We hear of the unconditional love and grace of God we need to be successful in parenting our kids.

THE GREAT CONTRAST...the way we were and the way we are...death and life!

Verses 1-3 – ***The Way We Were***

"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, [2] in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. [3] All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh (sinful nature) and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath."

Fill in the blanks.

"As for you, you were _____ in your transgressions and sins, in which you _____ _____ when you followed the _____ of this _____ and of the _____ of the _____ of the _____ , the _____ who is now _____ in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived _____ at one time, gratifying the _____ of our _____ and _____ its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of _____ ."

Think about this:

Paul states where we were before we had God "...***dead in our sins***" ... does this also describe the so-called parenting 'experts' who are not spiritually ***alive*** in Christ? For example, if a parenting guru does not believe there is such a thing as sin, how can we take their advice about the importance of disciplining our children properly?



1. Can our parenting be successful if we follow the ideas of spiritually "dead" experts?



PARENTING PITFALL

Parents might think all parenting advice is created equal. No! That God has made us alive in Christ, and that we are devoted to Him, makes Christian parenting advice altogether different from the parenting advice of the world ruled by those "who are disobedient."

Christians, living in a world ruled by the enemy, can become **de-sensitized** to our culture's thinking. Satan is its ruler. Cunning and deceptive, he worms his way into our parenting choices. We become complacent and accommodating to the **"schemes of the devil."** (Eph. 6:11)

The way we were...

- > *ways of the world*
- > *disobedient*
- > *cravings of the flesh*
- > *its desires and thoughts*
- > *deserving wrath*



As we parent our children, we must resist the pull to follow ***"the ways of this world."***

Since we inhabit this darkened world, we need to be wide awake. The devil is ***"at work in those who are disobedient."***

...because of the way we were, God could have reacted to us like this. He could have been:

angry, nasty, mean

harsh, hard, stern

unkind, punishing, vindictive

Verses 4-7 – *God's response…but because of…*

…because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, [5] made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. [6] And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, [7] in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus."

But because of His…	God, who is…	made us alive
great love for us	*rich in mercy*	*with Christ*

"IT IS BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED."

THEREFORE…As parents, we are able to respond to our children as God responds to us.



Our SPIRITUAL ADDRESS –

[6] "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the HEAVENLY REALMS in Christ Jesus

[7] "the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed to us in Christ Jesus"

2. Verses 4-7. When we view our children as God views us, it should influence how we parent our children. Do you agree? Write your thoughts.

3. Can you think of an example in your parenting recently where your first instinct was to be angry and punish your child, but God directed you to show mercy and grace instead?

Verses 8-9 – *the gift of God…*

[8] For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— [9] not by works so that no one can boast."



This is not from ourselves…

It is the GIFT OF GOD

The lesson here is that ***successful parenting*** is not something we do on our own. As we do our part, the Holy Spirit **GIVES** us what we need to raise our family in the blessing of God. Like salvation, it is a gift of God.

4. Is God able to give you what you need to parent your kids well? Will you really trust Him?

[10] "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

"Handiwork" or ***"workmanship"*** – This is the word in Greek for "POEM." We and each of our children are His POEM. He is writing His poetry in our lives. We are created for good works, prepared for us in advance. ***Parents, each of our children are prepared by God for good works.***

We are not the owners of our children; they belong to God. We are stewards of His children here on earth. God has a special future prepared for each child. Do you believe this?



ESSENTIAL #3

What have you learned?

AS A PARENT...what is your 'spiritual address? How does God see us and our children?
Do we see...

- our life before Christ and without Christ – the way we were?
- our life with Christ – the way we are, seated with Christ?
- our children the way God sees us?
- that we are stewards here on earth of God's children?
- that we are each His handiwork, prepared for good works?

"The love, mercy, grace, kindness, and gift of God overwhelm our minds and hearts and flow into our parenting. As parents, we must have God's perspective." —Dave & Linda Halse

MY PRAYER: "Father, thank You for

Amen.

ESSENTIAL #4: EPHESIANS 2:11-2

Who Lives in Our Neighbourhood: Race, Colour, Culture…and Oneness?

Built Together to Become a Dwelling in which God Lives by his Spirit



We all have memories of the neighbourhood in which we grew up as children. Our own children are aware of being raised in "their neighbourhood" right now. Neighbourhoods have both good and bad characteristics, and as parents we are all vigilant in paying attention to our neighbourhood so that we can protect our children in their environment.

In Essential #4 we are thinking about our ***'spiritual'*** neighbourhood. God has a spiritual neighbourhood designed for His people, you and me. In Ephesians 2:11-22, Paul writes about:

- Our 'spiritual neighbourhood' – our church, the body of Christ
- God's great eternal purpose in bringing members of families together in one body
- How we are being built together as a dwelling for God's Spirit

We hear the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child." That is similar to the idea here, although the village Paul is describing is a village not built by human hands, but by God. God is creating a spiritual community or body within which we parent God's children together in Christ. To make this a reality, God makes each Christian a dwelling in which He lives through the Holy Spirit.

ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

Let's expand our thinking about our neighbourhood in Christ as we allow Paul to take us into the mind of God. To many of us, it may seem like we are living as independent, disconnected, random, isolated family units. But God has a plan, an eternal building program engineered and built by Him. He is bringing us together, all the generations past, along with all of us, including our children, into His great plan and will.

As Christian parents, beyond what we do today in raising our children, God has an even **larger and greater purpose** in mind for all His children. The parenting we accomplish now, through faith in Christ,

is also part of God's will, in which He will ***"bring all things in heaven and earth together under one head, even Christ."*** (Eph. 1:10) We are not alone; we will occupy an eternal neighbourhood. We are ***"members of God's household."*** (Eph. 2:19)

› **Be encouraged! Your work as parents is bearing fruit, now and in eternity!**

Verses 11-13 – ***brought near in a spiritual neighbourhood…***

11 "Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)— 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

Fill in the blanks.

"… you who are Gentiles by birth and called "_____" by those who call themselves "the _____" …at that time you were _____, excluded from _____ and _____ of the _____, without _____ and without _____. But now in _____ you who once were _____ have been brought _____ by the _____."



PARENTING PITFALL

Parents understandably become focused on the routine, mundane, everyday minutia of just getting through the week as a family. Life can seem to be meaningless, but God reveals that the children we raise in faith in Christ are also part of His eternal plan.



Our 'spiritual neighbourhood' – the church, the body of Christ, is formed around Christ in our hearts and it is the spiritual neighbourhood to which your family belongs.

God is bringing ALL His children TOGETHER by the blood of Christ to be INCLUDED in the "covenants of the promise." His promise unites us in belonging to God's community.

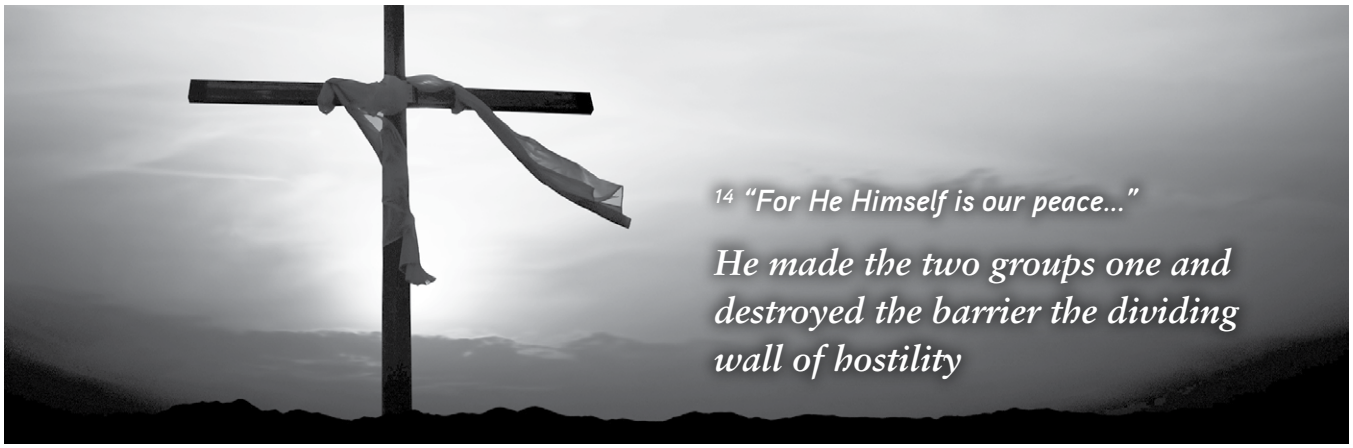
1. As Christian parents, are we aware that God has a spiritual plan to bring all His children together into one body? What do think or feel about this promise of God?

2. Do you ever think about how your family fits into God's great plan for the ages? What are the things that get in the way of thinking this way?

3. When we know our destiny in God's plan, how does it reassure us as believing parents? Your thoughts:

Verses 11-13 – ***"making peace"…Race, Colour, Culture…and ONENESS***

14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in His flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in Himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.18 For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.



17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

4. Think about the hostility in our society and in our neighbourhoods. In our spiritual neighbourhood, Christ brings us together in **peace**. Does this encourage you as a parent? Your thoughts…

Verses 19-22 – ***"in which God lives by His Spirit"***

[18] For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, living in us, gives us all access as individuals and as parents to the Father.

[19] "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers,...but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of His household,

People of different race, colour, and culture are brought into oneness in Christ.

[20] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. [21] In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. [22] in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.



5. Our spiritual neighbourhood is a holy temple in which all Christians are together in peace. We are a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit. What does this do for you as a parent? Your thoughts:

6. What about single parents or parents with special needs kids? How can we help one another as we come alongside in our spiritual neighbourhood, the body of Christ?

A VERY IMPORTANT BY-PRODUCT of this immense biblical truth is that in our churches God provides a spiritual environment, a close neighbourhood, which offers every parent the opportunity to access the spiritual gifts and resources that serve to support our parenting capacity. A good book on this topic is ***Parenting Beyond Your Capacity*** by Reggie Joiner and Carey Nieuwhof.



ESSENTIAL #4

What have you learned?

AS A PARENT...

- About our 'spiritual neighbourhood' – our church? The body of Christ? The "holy temple in the Lord?
- About God's eternal purpose in bringing families together in one humanity and one body?
- About how we are being built together as a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit?
- About how we expand our capacity to parent well by sharing together in our spiritual neighbourhood, the church body?

"We are filled with peace and joy in knowing that our family is a part of the eternal plan of God. What a privilege to be a parent in God's great family." —Dave & Linda Halse

MY PRAYER: "Father, thank You for _____

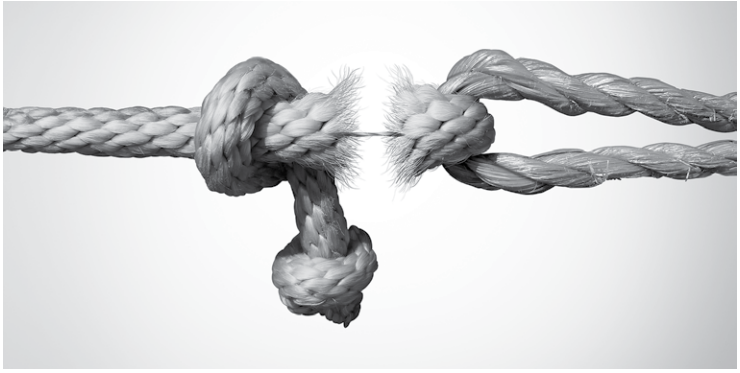
_____ Amen.

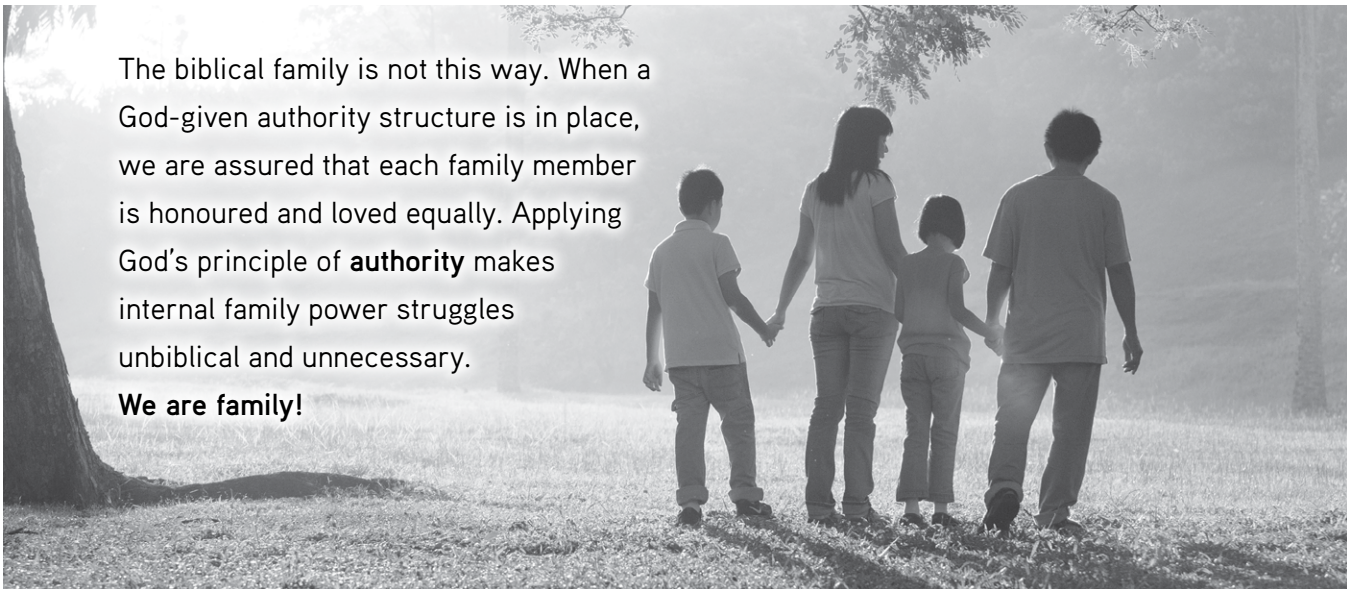
ESSENTIAL #5: EPHESIANS 3:1-21

Power Parenting - Above and Beyond

Powered from Above and Reaching Beyond

SADLY, IN OUR CULTURE TODAY, we see relationships within families that have become plagued with destructive **power** struggles. Each member of the family wants their own way.





The biblical family is not this way. When a God-given authority structure is in place, we are assured that each family member is honoured and loved equally. Applying God's principle of **authority** makes internal family power struggles unbiblical and unnecessary.
We are family!

Authority System

GOD

Father and Mother

Child – Child – Child

In Essential #5, Ephesians 3:1-21, we learn that God 'empowers' us to parent our children far **above and beyond** what we could experience without Christ. In our spiritual home in the heavenly realms, seated with Christ, we have His power to parent beyond our capacity.

1. Do you notice power struggles going on within many families today?

2. In your family, is the God-given authority structure in place ensuring that each family member is honoured and loved equally? Your comment, please?

3. God 'empowers' us to parent our children **far above and beyond**. Do you feel this way as a parent? Would you like more of God's "above and beyond" empowerment?

Empowerment from God begins with our humility, moves into receiving God's grace, then opens to His revelation to us. **Successful Christian parenting is about revelation by the Spirit!**

In the following verses Paul reveals the way in which he receives wisdom from God.

Verses 1, 7, and 13 – "I, Paul, the prisoner (1) … servant (7) … sufferings"(13)
I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles… [7] I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of His power. [13] I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.



Verses 2-6 – *the mystery of Christ revealed*
[2] Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, [3] that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. [4] In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, [5] which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. [6] This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Fill in the blanks.
Watch for these themes: Paul's **humility**, God's **grace**, God's **revelation**

I, Paul, the p_____ of Christ Jesus … (he is imprisoned in Rome as he writes) [2] Surely you have heard about the a_____ of God's g_____ that was g_____ to me for you, [3] that is, the m_____ made known to me by r_____ ,… [4] In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my i_____ into the m_____ of Christ, [5] which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been r_____ by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. [6] This m_____ is that through the gospel the Gentiles are h_____ together with Israel, m_____ together of o_____ body, and s_____ together in the p_____ in Christ Jesus.

4. Do you see how humility opens us to grace, and to God's revelation? These work together to bring to us day to day spiritual insights for parenting successfully.

_____

_____

Freedom and Confidence for Parenting Empowerment…

Verses 8-12 – *"we may approach God with freedom and confidence"*

[8] Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, [9] and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

Less than the least

Paul's humility again: "I am less than the least …"

grace given me to preach the boundless riches of Christ make plain to everyone

Confidence

[10] His intent was that now, THROUGH THE CHURCH, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, [11] according to His eternal purpose that He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Through the church…wisdom of God made known…His eternal purpose!

Jesus → *Manifold Wisdom of God*

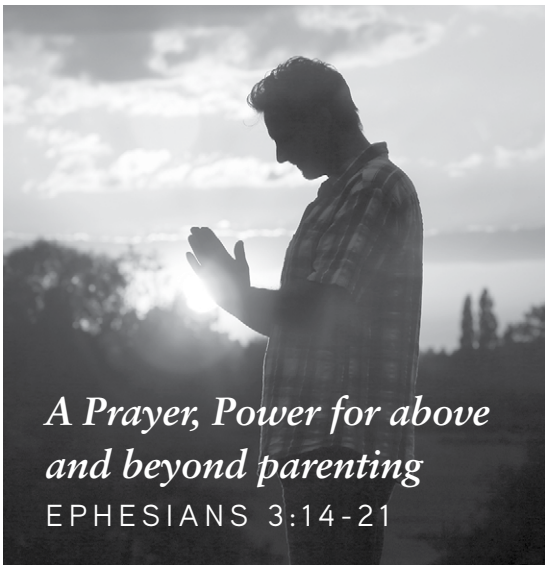
[12] In Him and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

5. What does verse 12 say to us about how to gain freedom and confidence as parents?

PARENTING PITFALL

Christian parents do well to understand that the secular information we might rely on is ineffective and can be spiritually harmful in the long run. Successful parenting relies on approaching God, in Christ, for parenting wisdom. True wisdom comes from revelation, not human intellect.

Parents, here is a suggestion – copy Paul's prayer below and put it in a location where you can see it everyday. Pray this for your marriage and family, and watch God's power grow in you!



14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, 21 to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.



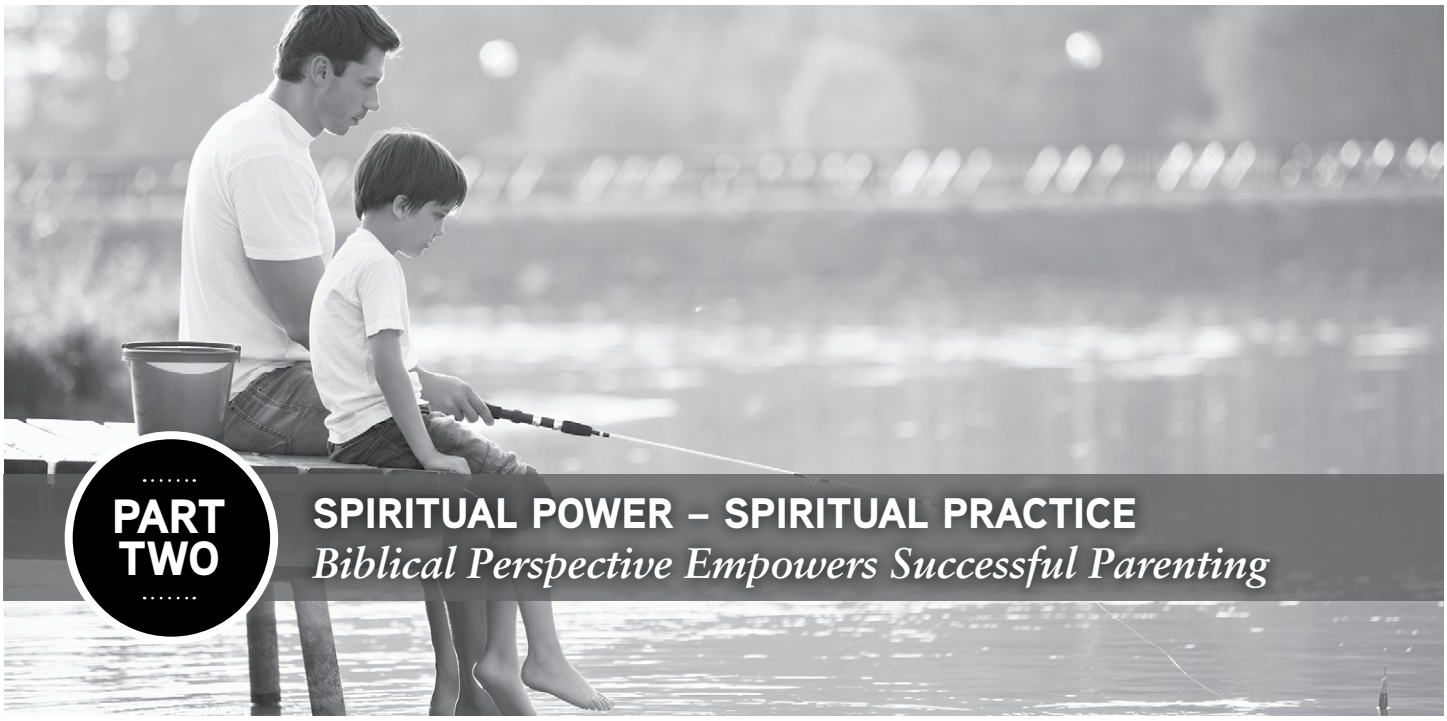
AS A PARENT...

- About our God-given authority structure and how it empowers us as parents?
- About how God 'empowers' us to parent our children "far above and beyond?"
- About how humility, God's grace, and God's revelation by His Spirit empower us?
- About how to approach God for freedom and confidence in parenting our family?
- About praying daily God's riches, power, faith, love, and fullness into our families?

"We can appreciate knowledge and intellect, but in Christ, we approach God to receive all of the grace, wisdom, and power we need to parent successfully." —Dave & Linda Halse

MY PRAYER: "Father, thank You for _____

_____ Amen.



PART TWO

SPIRITUAL POWER – SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Biblical Perspective Empowers Successful Parenting

ESSENTIAL #6: EPHESIANS 4:1-16

What Every Parent Wants: Unity and Maturity in Their Family

One Way that REALLY Works



In Part Two of our parenting guide we follow Paul as he leads us into the second half of the epistle - a **walk in the everyday world** of people **made alive in Christ**. In all we have been given spiritually, seated in the heavenly realms with Christ, Paul urges us to ***"walk worthy of the calling we have received."*** Paul teaches us to live our lives in **worthy response to Christ.**

As Christian parents, we want a lot of things for our children over their lifetime, but our most important goal is to raise children who will carry into adulthood the desire to: *"...live a life worthy of the calling you have received"*

In verse 1, Paul writes, ***"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received."***

1. What does verse 1 say to you? Is this one of your big goals for your children? Discuss.

OUR TESTIMONY as parents of adult children who are married and have children: there is nothing more important than to see our children living a life worthy of the calling they have received.



PARENTS – we know that we as adults must **BE** this example. **Living** a life worthy of our calling begins with mom and dad. We plant the seeds in our children of **patterns** we live out before them. We show the way! **Our marriage is their prime example** – in how we love each other, how we lead our family, and how we create quality relationships with others.

And when we approach the finish line of life on earth, the greatest comfort we will have is knowing we have done all we can to encourage our children to live a life worthy of their calling.

We can all have this same joy and peace as maturing parents, and Paul tells us ***how it's done***.

HOW TO BEGIN:

2 ***"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love."***

a life worthy = Be...

> completely humble and gentle > patient > bearing with one another

completely – This is ***wholehearted*** humility and gentleness. A worthy life requires being real, being authentically humble and gentle, all the time, in every situation, and not for appearances.

humble – a mindset in which we ***choose*** to lay aside our strength, our pride, and our selfishness as we consider others' interests ahead of our own. We make ourselves humble. See 1 Peter 5:6

gentle – tender-hearted, merciful, temperate, considerate, authentically kind in word and deed, quiet spirit, softness of heart; not harsh, not controlling, not forceful, not demanding.

patient - the mindset to ***wait***, to trust, to persevere ***despite*** difficulties, to ***suffer*** without ***complaining*** or ***becoming annoyed*** or losing our temper, willing to wait when it's hard.

bearing with one another in love – putting up with one another, meekness, merciful, longsuffering, making allowances for others, carrying the burden of loving others.

2. As a parent, how does verse 2 help you? How are you doing at living this out?

.....

.....

3 "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

> *…keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*



ONENESS IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

4 "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Fill in the blanks.

"Make every _____ to keep the _____ of the _____ through the _____ . There is _____ body and _____ Spirit, just as you were called to _____ hope when you were called; _____ Lord, _____ faith, _____ baptism; 6 _____ God and Father of all, who is _____ all and _____ all and _____ all."

3. Verses 3-6. How do these verses guide our thinking about keeping unity and peace in our home?

.....

.....

PARENTING PITFALL

We must "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" in our homes. This won't just happen. It takes focus and effort. We have an enemy. Christian parents are in a daily battle for unity and peace in their homes.

As parents who are followers of Christ we are not alone. We are resourced by Christ.



Verses 7-16 should be read together as they form a massive statement about the spiritual power of the church in our lives. These verses teach an essential truth about our **growth and maturity** in Christ – this growth happens by way of the very special nature of the church. As Christian parents, the **power** we all receive as described by Paul in Chapter 3 is **multiplied** as God joins us together ***in the body of Christ*** in a special way – by the giving of ***spiritual gifts***.

As you ascend from peak to peak up to this mountaintop of truth take time to savour the view.

7 ***"But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it."***

grace given to each of us → *Christ apportioned* → *gave gifts to the body*

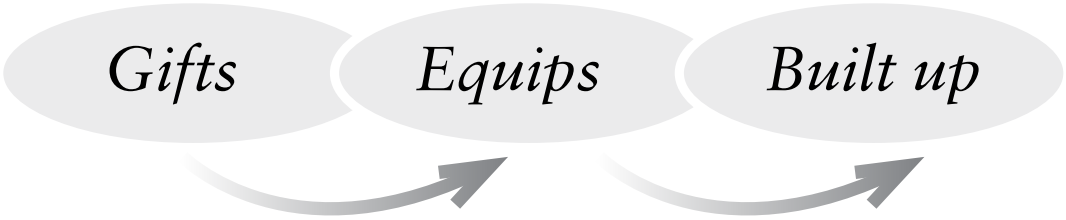
8 ***"This is why it says: "When He ascended on high, He took many captives and gave gifts to His people." (Psalm 68:18) 9 (What does "he ascended" mean except that He also descended to the lower, earthly regions? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)"***

Paul refers to Psalm 68:18 to declare that Christ is the fulfillment of the truth – He is the Giver of ***"gifts to His people."***

11 ***"So Christ Himself gave to the body:***

- ***apostles*** – special messengers (missionaries perhaps?)
- ***prophets*** – inspired preachers, individuals for purifying the body of sin
- ***evangelists*** – preachers and individuals for sharing the Gospel
- ***pastors*** – shepherds of the church, guiding and encouraging
- ***teachers*** – declaring truth to the church

12 "to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up"



13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.



The RESULT is that we all, parents and children alike, grow into maturity in Christ.

4. This is very important teaching! Christ gives us "gifts" to build unity and maturity in the church. How do the gifts in the body help you raise your family?

14 So that…"Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming."

AMPLIFIED BIBLE "tossed (like ships) to and fro between chance gusts of teaching, and wavering with every changing wind of doctrine, (the prey of) the cunning and cleverness of unscrupulous men engaged in every form of trickery in inventing errors to mislead."

15 "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ."

AMPLIFIED BIBLE "truth in all things - speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly, enfolded in love"

WHAT A POWERFUL FAMILY PRINCIPLE – we are mature in Christ…truthful and loving. We are willing and able, with the help of God's Spirit, to confront one another with compassion.

5. Discuss the importance of "speaking the truth in love" in your marriage and family.

[16] ***"From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."***

6. ***"as each part does its work"*** What is your "part" in doing the ***"work"*** in the body?



ESSENTIAL #6

What have you learned?

AS A PARENT...

- About living a life worthy of the calling you have received, as a person and a parent?
- About being an example as you lead your family - humility, gentleness, patience?
- About making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace?
- About Christ's gifts to the body - we will all be built up and mature as we do our part?

"We love this passage as it tells us that in setting an example in our homes and in doing our part in the body we are all growing up into the fullness of Christ." —Dave & Linda Halse

MY PRAYER: "Father, thank You for

Amen.

ESSENTIAL #7: EPHESIANS 4:17-32

Parents and Kids: Living as Children of God

We are created to live this way in our families



In the first half of Chapter 4, Paul urges us to **walk worthy of the calling we have received: to be humble, gentle, patient, bear with one another, and to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit.** He teaches about Christ's ***gifts*** to the church, then builds to a great crescendo in describing how in the body we all mature into the ***fullness of Christ***. 4:15-16

Verses 17-32: Living as Children of God – Instructions for Christian Living

"So I tell you this, and *insist* on it in the Lord..."

1. Are you the kind of person that likes taking instructions, or not? As a parent, do you lead your children by communicating biblical direction and ***"insist on it in the Lord?"***

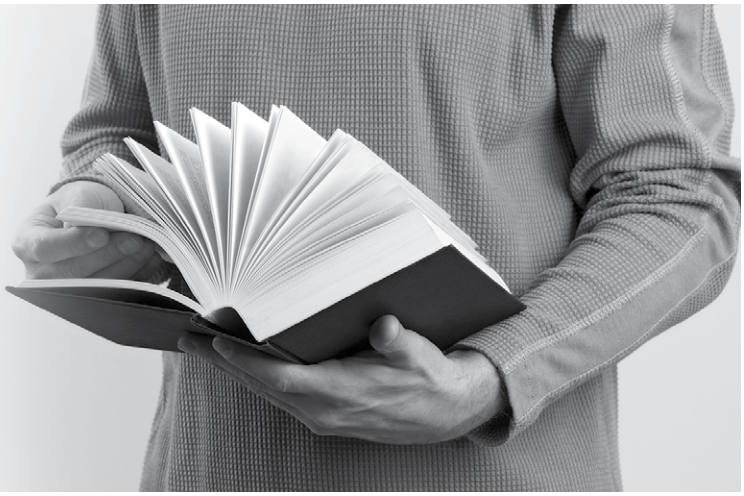
As a spiritual 'parent' to the Ephesians, Paul was ***insistent*** in what he said to them. Moreover, he was insistent ***"in the Lord."*** This was not "take it or leave it." Paul received inspiration from God's Spirit and authority to speak to the churches ***"in the Lord,"*** not from his own ideas, opinions, or values. Likewise, we must be intentional and insistent as parents.



PARENTING PITFALL

Some parents think their kids will figure it out on their own. They don't discipline their children because they are afraid. We must not be "darkened in our understanding" about instructing our children "in the Lord."

As Christian parents, it's essential to use the Bible and to *"insist on it in the Lord"* rather than use our own ideas or family experience or inherited values.



For instance, a dad might say "if it was good enough for me, it's good enough for my child." As adults, we think it's okay to parent our kids the way we were parented. This is a mistake if our parents, Christians or not, were not insisting on biblical direction. We must take our instructions from the Bible and ***"insist on it in the Lord"*** when we instruct or correct our children.

2. Is this a problem in our parenting? Do we default to our own ideas or to patterns our parents used?

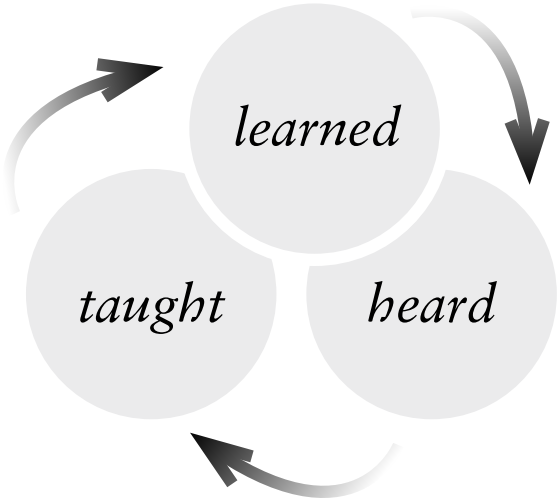


Verses 17b – 19 ***"… you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking…darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. [19] Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed (wanting more.)"***

Fill in the blanks. "… you must _____ as the Gentiles do, in the _____ of their _____ in their _____ and _____ from the _____ of God because of the _____ that is in them due to the _____ of their _____ [19] Having _____ all _____, they have _____ themselves over to _____ so as to _____ in every kind of impurity, and they are full of _____ (wanting more.)"

…Does this sound like our world? How do we guard our families from this tragic way of life?

Verses 20-24 ***"… the way of life you learned…"***
20 That, however, is not the way of life you learned 21 when you heard about Christ and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.



Notice these words – ***learned, heard,*** and ***taught***. Of course, we know that as parents we ourselves, must be first to learn and hear and be taught. We are ***"taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus."*** Since it is true that we are taught the truth in Jesus, we are intentional in seeing that our children ***learn, hear*** and are ***taught in Him***.



V. 22-24 ***"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life,***

- ***"to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires"***
- ***to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self"***

3. In teaching our children Christian living, do the phrases ***"put off"*** and ***"put on"*** in verses 22-24 help us? Do they give a visual idea of how to teach the old and the new self?

Our new self is [24b] ***…created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.***

[25] Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. [26] "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, [27] and do not give the devil a foothold. [28] Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. [29] Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

[25] put off _____ and speak _____ to your neighbor

[26] In your anger _____ : Do not let the sun go down while you are _____

[28] steal no longer, but must _____ , doing _____

[29] Do not let any _____ come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for

_____ according to their needs,

WHAT IS THE REASON OR THE BLESSING?

[25] for we are all _____.

[27] and do not give the devil a _____ .

[28] that they may have something to _____ with those _____ .

[29] that it may _____ who _____

Verse 29 is always a special challenge. When we **choose** our words, we must remember to speak in ways that will **build up, not tear down**. The verse ends with the reminder that our words should always ***"benefit those who listen."*** Often, those who listen are ***our children***.

4. As you consider verses 25-29, which of these teachings challenge you?



VERSES 30-32 –
Prayerfully read these 3 final verses. Examine your heart, are you being obedient? Are your children being given a good example to follow as they are being taught?

30 ***"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."***

Are you aware that you might be doing this? Write your thoughts here.

31 ***"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice."***

Do you need to do this as a parent? Write your thoughts here.

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

How are you doing with this? Write your thoughts here.

Remember – we can expect our children to be obedient to the Lord in *"putting off"* and *"putting on"* only to the degree that we are obedient to the Lord as parents.



ESSENTIAL #7

What have you learned?

AS A PARENT...

- are you giving your children bible-based direction and do you ***"insist on it in the Lord"?***
- we must no longer live as the non-Christian world does, ***"in the futility of their thinking"***
- our children must learn, hear, and be taught ***"the truth that is in Jesus,"*** not from our own ideas or experience or inherited traditions
- our new self is ***"... created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."***
- Specific ways in which God teaches us to ***"put off the old self and put on the new self"***

"We are challenged to put off the "old self" and put on the "new self." It is crucial that we faithfully obey the Lord in these instructions, always being an authentic example as parents." —Dave & Linda Halse

MY PRAYER: "Father, thank You for

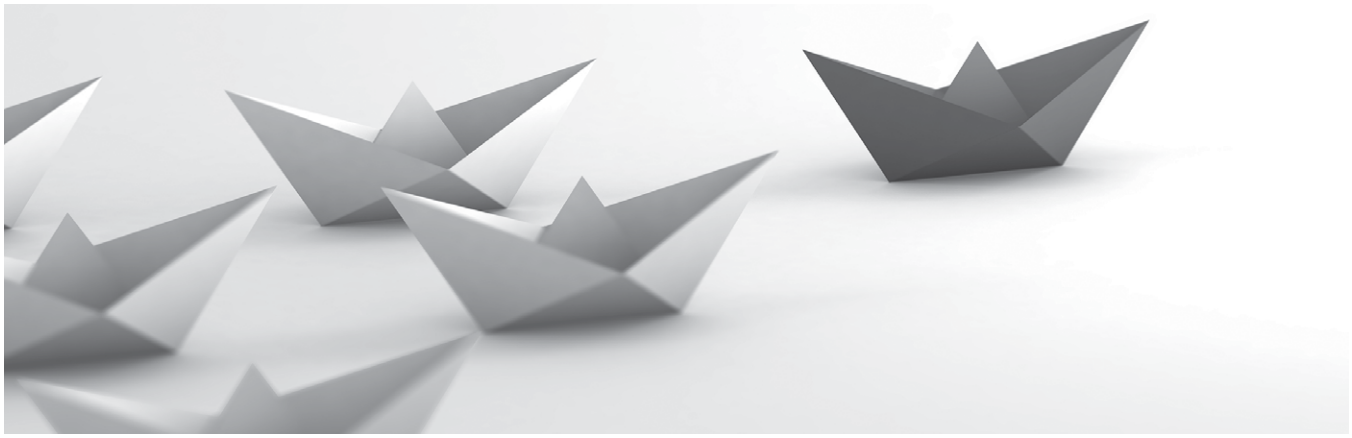
Amen.

ESSENTIAL #8: EPHESIANS 5:1-20

Follow the Leader

Lead Your Family by Your EXAMPLE, Always!

In Essential #7 we saw that Paul ***"insists…in the Lord"*** that Christ followers live ***"in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus"***. To walk worthy of our calling, he insists that we adopt certain patterns of thinking and conduct that demonstrate life in Christ.



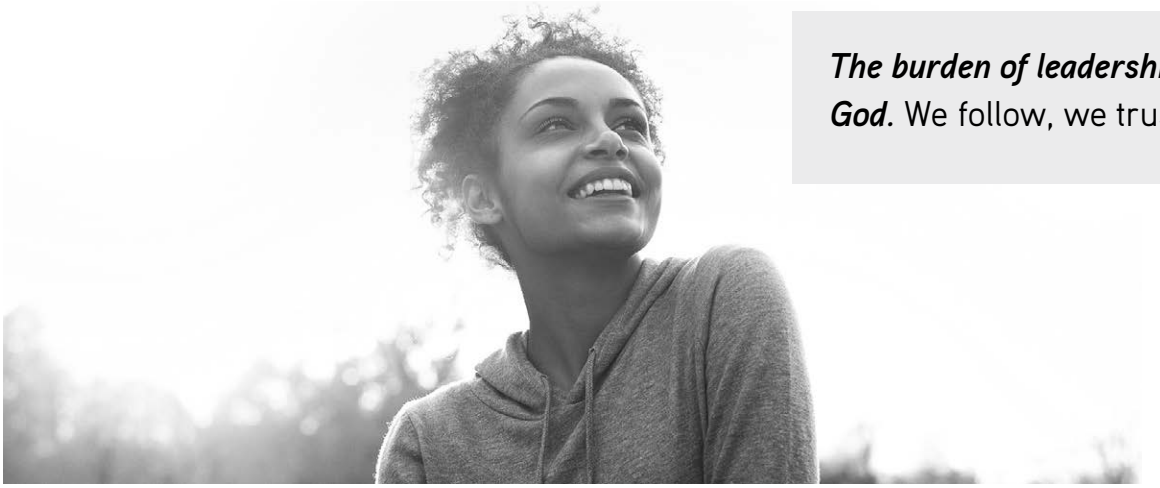
As parents, we are wise to question parenting information that is contrary to Scripture. For example, a non-biblical idea might be this: It's okay for family members to say whatever they want to other family members. This might sound acceptable but does it violate Scripture? Yes, it does. Ephesians 4:29 says we are to be careful about our words, making sure our speaking is ***"helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."***

"Putting off" and ***"putting on"*** - In Ephesians 4:22-24, Paul introduced this picture to help us know how to live ***"a life worthy of the calling we have received."*** In the first half of chapter 5, he adds additional insights to help us live as ***"God's holy people."*** (5:3)

In this fifth chapter, Paul continues to teach on living ***"a life worthy of our calling."*** Leading our family in living life in line with the Bible might seem too difficult for us as parents. We may feel we have fallen behind in leading our family biblically. It's not too late. Change is possible. In chapter 5, we are given a key to successfully leading our family in a ***"life of love."***

The key point is this: **follow the leader**. ***"Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children [2] and walk in the way of love, (or live a life of love) just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."*** Eph. 5:1-2

Did you ever play 'follow the leader' as a child? The leader has all the pressure of choosing where to lead the line of kids. The rest of the kids in the line only need to follow the leader.



The burden of leadership is on God. We follow, we trust Him.

Fill in the blanks.

"Follow God's _____ as dearly loved children" (we are loved)...and live a life of love just as Christ _____ us and _____ for us as a fragrant _____ and _____ to God."

1. How do you feel about being the leader(s) of your family? Does being the leader come easily for you, or is it difficult to take the lead? What are the hard things about leading?

2. In reading verse 1, how do you feel about leading your family? Do you get comfort in knowing the key is to "follow God's example" in leading your family?



PARENTING PITFALL

The culture in which we live today is more child–centered than the culture in which we all grew up. Christian parents must be equipped to accept their leadership role, taking the responsibility to lead their families with God's example to follow, and with the help of His Spirit.

What does living ***"a life of love"*** look like for us as parents? The indicators are here in this passage, from verses 1-21. Paul leads us from Christ's example... ***"just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God"*** through to the operating principle in the life of a true believer, the principle of **submission**. ***"Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ."*** Eph. 5:21

In verse 3 Paul begins, "But AMONG you there must not be…"

Paul says *"AMONG* you…" Here he is looking at the church as a body, not just as individuals. In the body, and in our families, we follow Christ as a company of believers.



In Essential #4 we considered the prominence of the church in God's plan. As Christ followers, we are connected to each other through our faith in Christ. We look out for the interests of one another to keep the body pure. The body of Christ is the church and here Paul emphasizes we are all to make sure that ***"among"*** us certain Christ following behaviours are maintained.

As Christian parents, we understand that we are not alone in raising our children; we raise our children in the nurture of both our home and the church body. We connect with the Spirit in the body. The Spirit is helping in our family through leaders and members of the church. This is why Paul urges us all to do our part in guarding the strength and the purity of our fellowship.

3. Are we aware that in the body we are all responsible for what is done ***"among"*** us? Your thoughts?

In verses 3-21, Paul establishes rules and consequences ***"for God's holy people."***

Verses 3 and 4 -"but among you there must not be *even a hint of…*

- *sexual immorality*
- *any kind of impurity*
- *greed*

because these are improper for God's holy people.

Nor should there be…

- *obscenity*
- *foolish talk*
- *coarse joking*

which are out of place…but rather Thanksgiving

As in Paul's day, our world today is power, sex, and money-crazed. Without God, our culture's appetite for power, for sexual immorality, and its greed are out of control. Paul condemns sexual immorality, ('pornea' is the Greek word from which we get 'pornography') impurity, greed, (lust for money) obscenity, foolish talk and course joking. Paul states clearly that all these are ***"out of place"*** for Christians. Are these allowed ***"among"*** us?

As Christian parents we must prayerfully do all we can to insist on purity in our homes. We must be watchful every day to keep out the ***"fruitless deeds of darkness"*** (v. 11)

Having this in mind, it is essential that Christian parents understand and know how to teach biblical sexuality to their children. To do this well, we as couples need to share biblically based sexual intimacy in our own marriages.

See Communicating Biblical Sexuality and Intimacy with your Child and Teen. *(Part Three, pages 88-91)*



EXTREME CONSEQUENCES – VERSES 5 & 6

5 for of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them."

4. Verses 5 and 6 – strong language! Are we paying attention to these serious warnings, both personally, and as parents? .....

.....

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are LIGHT in the Lord. Live as children of light. 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord.



[11] Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. [12] It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. [13] But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. [14] This is why it is said: "Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."



VERSES 8-14 –
Our world is dark. We need to help our children by exposing *"the fruitless deeds of darkness."* LIGHT the way in showing your family how to *"live a life of love"* in Christ.

[15] Be very careful, then, how you live... [16] making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

not as unwise	*but as wise*
[17] do not be foolish,	*understand what the Lord's will is.*
[18] do not get drunk on wine,...debauchery	*Instead, be filled with the Spirit,*

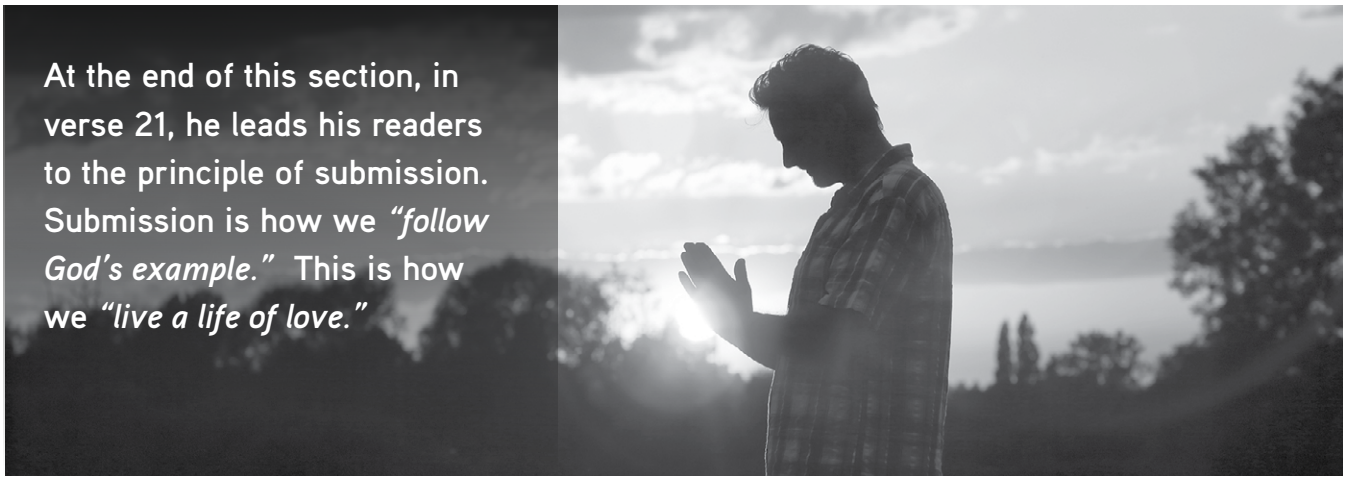
[19] speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from (or "in") your heart to the Lord, [20] always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Living this life is ***beyond our grasp without the filling of the Holy Spirit*** in our lives.

5. Can we ***speak*** and ***sing*** to each other and to the Lord this way? Can we ***give thanks*** to God for everything? Yes, if we are ***filled with the Spirit*** and if we give thanks ***"in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*** How important are verses 18-20 in nurturing one another in our families?

Verse 21 - Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Being filled with the Spirit enables us to submit. What does living a life of love look like for believers? Paul gives clear answers. In verses 1 and 2 Paul begins with Christ's example…***"just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."***



Submission is the primary ***operating principle*** in following God's example.

The word **'submit'** has 2 parts. They are: **sub** + **mit**.

Sub means under; mit means send. Submit means send under.

The principle we need as believing parents is the loving attitude of 'sending ourselves under' ***"out of reverence for Christ."*** When we ***"submit to one another"*** we lift the other person up.

Submission is the **core principle** of living a life of love. Our reverence for Christ empowers us to give ourselves up as He did for us…***"as a fragrant offering and sacrifice for God."***

Verse 21, the principle of submission, is like a mountain peak looking back on Paul's instructions for ***"God's holy people"*** (1-21) on one hand, and looking forward to his teaching on submission in relationships of various kinds on the other hand. (Eph. 5:22-6:9)



ESSENTIAL #8

What have you learned?

AS A PARENT...

- are we seeking to ***"follow God's example"*** as we lead our families?
- are we following Christ's lead? ***"just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God"***?
- ***"among you"*** – are we safeguarding the purity of our family and our church?
- are we paying attention to the rules and consequences for ***"God's holy people"***?
- are we ***"very careful how we live ... filled with the Spirit...always giving thanks to God in everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ"***?
- are we ***"living a life of love"*** by submitting to one another ***"out of reverence for Christ"***?

"Living a life of love is both demanding and rewarding. Obeying the submission principle is the best thing we have done in our marriage, family, and personal lives." —Dave & Linda Halse

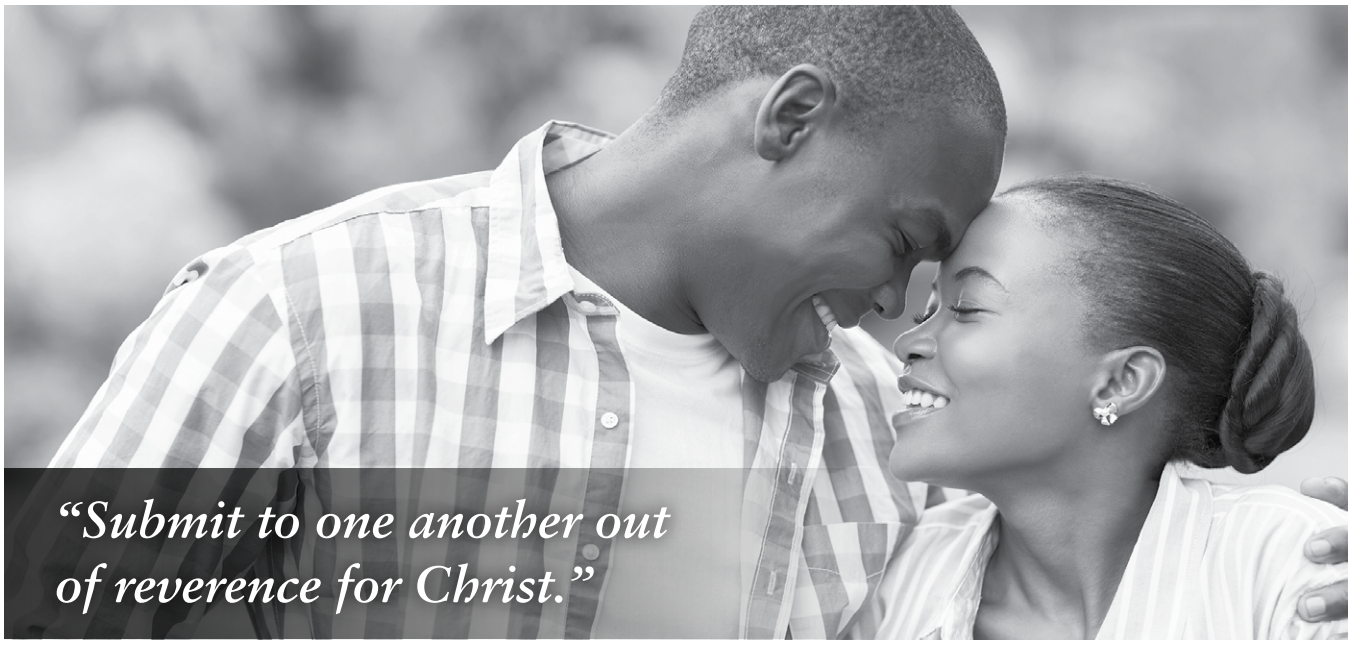
MY PRAYER: "Father, thank You for

Amen.

ESSENTIAL #9: EPHESIANS 5:21-33

And Don't Forget Your Marriage

The Marriage Your Kids See and Hear Every Day will Become their Marriage



In this second half of Ephesians 5, Paul continues to teach the fundamentals of what it means to ***"live a life worthy of the calling you have received"*** and to ***"live a life of love."***

Essential #9 (verses 21-33) focuses on husbands and wives. **The foundation of every family is the marriage.** Parenting our children successfully requires a strong, loving marriage built on the truth and wisdom of God's word. Husbands are to fulfill their spiritual leadership role in the marriage, and wives are to respond in their spiritual helper role, according to God's design.

The marriage relationship our children see, hear, and learn everyday in their own home is the marriage relationship they will default to in their own marriage. Inevitably, our married children gradually drift into living out **embedded marriage patterns** learned at home. Complicating the picture is the fact that they will have each been influenced by two different family of origin marriage patterns, resulting in an inevitable clash of value systems. As the sub-title says, "The Marriage Your Kids See and Hear Every Day will Become Their Marriage." Times that by two.

1. How do you feel about these two opening paragraphs? Do you agree or disagree? Do you have embedded patterns in your marriage through observing your parents' marriage?

PARENTING PITFALL

Marriages are under attack today, even Christian marriages! Pay close attention - your marriage is the foundation of your family life, and it is the example for your children as they create their marriage and family life. Our marriages must be rooted in biblical truth.

GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE

Before we look at this passage, there are ***3 bedrock understandings*** we need to understand.



Bedrock Understandings

I "be filled with the Spirit" *II "Submit to one another"*

III Authority Principle

I "BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT." 5:18

In God's design, marriage is an intensely spiritual relationship, the most wonderful but challenging relationship in all the created world. But the marriage we are created for and we long for, is ***beyond our grasp*** without the ***filling of the Holy Spirit*** in our lives.

"Spiritual marriage is a relationship of learning and growing in submission day by day because it is the most intimate, interpersonal relationship in which humans participate. Spiritual marriage is a tangible expression of the intimate and holy relationship of Christ, the Bridegroom, with his bride, the Church." *Marriage Oneness System*, pg. 9, Dave and Linda Halse

II "SUBMIT TO ONE ANOTHER OUT OF REVERENCE FOR CHRIST." 5:21

In Essential #8, we said this submission principle is the "core principle" of living a life of love.

"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Genesis 1:27

God created us in in His image according to gender, male and female, completely different in essence and completely equal in relationship. How can two equal but different human beings live and work in harmony? In our equality and differentness, the only possible way we can thrive together in unity is to learn to ***submit to one another in reverence to Christ*** by the power of His Spirit!

III AUTHORITY PRINCIPLE

Authority is God-given and essential for relationships. In Essential #1 we saw the principles of identity and authority as they are meant to operate in Christian living and parenting. It is according to God's will that we accept God's authority given to us through Christ. That authority empowers us to provide leadership and maintain order in our marriages and families. ***The principle of authority is the most important relationship principle in our lives.***

By employing God-given authority in our marriage and family, we are able to submit to each other, to create peace and order in our family, and to raise God-honouring children.

Applying these three ***bedrock understandings*** empowers us to live in God's design for marriage.

2. What are your thoughts about these 3 "bedrock understandings"? Do you agree that these three principles are vitally important in building God's design in our marriage?



GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE – TO WIVES, VERSES 22-24

22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.
21 …the husband is the head of the wife…as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior.
24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

WIVES AND SUBMISSION

We mentioned above that the marriage we are created for is "beyond our grasp without the filling of the Holy Spirit" (pg. 56) As the man's ***equal***, it is humanly impossible for a woman to submit to her husband ***"in everything."*** It is only made possible in the power of the Spirit and in a heart of reverence to Christ. The following quote will help a woman gain biblical perspective.



"Though you are equal to your husband, give up the right to control him with your strength. Give him your trust as if you are trusting the Lord. Submit to him as to the Lord. A primary need God has placed in man is to know his wife trusts him to lead her. Submitting her will is an act of trusting the Lord through her husband. By her submission ***a wife helps her husband grow up as a spiritual leader***. Without her trust, a man can't grow up emotionally and spiritually. *The Marriage Oneness System*, Dave and Linda Halse, page 82

Here is a key verse to help wives. ***"The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord; He directs it like a watercourse wherever He pleases."*** Proverbs 21:1. God will change a husband's heart when she obeys this principle. This is a powerful promise given by God to wives who trust Him.

husband head	*wife* body
Christ head	*church* body

"The Bible clearly exalts the woman. Proverbs 31:10-31 is a passage that honours the ***"wife of noble character."*** It is a powerful description of the life and accomplishments of a ***"woman who fears the Lord."*** (v. 30). ***"Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her."*** (v. 28). This Proverbs 31 marriage relationship is a wonderful example of how leadership roles play out in a union that honours God's design." *The Marriage Oneness System*, Dave and Linda Halse, pg. 83.

3. Is God asking too much of a woman – to respect her husband in everything? Is it too hard? Why is it hard to do? Does a wife need the filling of the Spirit to submit to her husband?



GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE – TO HUSBANDS, VERSES 25-33

[25] Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

God's design requires a kind of love that is not natural to men; it's supernatural. This is a love that is completely self-sacrificing, like Christ's love. Both husbands and wives need to be filled with the Spirit to live up to God's design for marriage.

The **quality** of a husband's love for his wife is special. Many husbands say they love their wives, but the kind of love that is required is the self-giving, unconditional love of Christ.

[26] to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, [27] and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

The **effect** of a husband's love is a picture of the effect of Christ's love for the church. As Christ loves the church, a husband is to love his wife. He is to love his wife in such a way that she is spiritually ***"radiant."*** The bride we see on the wedding day is the visible picture of the radiant bride of Christ, His church. A husband's love brings forth the radiant beauty she then offers him.



[28] In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. [29] After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— [30] for we are members of His body.

Paul observes that the 'natural man' is known for taking good care of his own body. Here we might think about male ego, or a man's vanity, or his tendency to be self-centered. Paul urges that husbands give of themselves in cherishing their wives. As Christ nurtures the church, husbands nurture their wives, understanding that we are all "members of His body." (from *The Marriage Oneness System*, Dave and Linda Halse, pg. 83)

HUSBANDS AND SUBMISSION

A husband submits to his wife by loving her sacrificially and leading her with a servant heart. It's helpful to note the root of the word 'husband.' The word (husbandry) originally identified the male who protected and cared for the animals he owned. (Random House Dictionary). God designed the woman to enjoy the security of the protecting care of her husband.



This kind of husband is able to love his wife well because he learns to enter her heart – her world of feeling. This kind of emotional connection and empathy is not natural for most men. It is, though, how a biblical husband leads and serves his wife in love. He leads by serving her, not in his way, but in hers. Remember, this sacrificial love comes through the power of the Spirit.

4. Do men tend to be naturally self-centered? Why do men need God to help them love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her?

[31] ***"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."***

HEAD AND BODY SYMBIOSIS

"This is a symbiotic relationship. The head cannot function without the body because the body supports and feeds the head. In turn, the body depends on the head to meet its needs for direction and protection. Here's an example. If you injure your foot your head will be sensitized and will guard the damaged foot. The foot can't see and understand like the head. It depends on the head. The head is conscious of protecting the body; in turn, the body supports and feeds the head. In God's design, the head responds to the needs of the body with protection and care. Since the body (wife) is vulnerable, it has a powerful influence on the head to be its protector, its security. In turn, the body nourishes the head." *The Marriage Oneness System*, pg. 83, 84

32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

The relationship of Christ and the church and the uniting together of husband and wife are a profound mystery to Paul. But in God's amazing creation design husband and wife become one in submission to the power of the Spirit. This unity creates a picture of the union of Christ, the bride groom, and the church, His bride.

Read the Amplified Bible version of verse 33 below. What a picture of love and submission!
Amplified Bible ***"...let each man of you (without exception) love his wife as his very own self; and let the wife see that she respects and reverences her husband – that she notices him, regards him, honours him, prefers him, venerates and esteems him; and that she defers to him, praises him, and loves and admires him exceedingly."***

5. If every husband and wife were to submit to one another in the Spirit, in God's design, in reverence to Christ, what would our marriages and families be like today?



AS A PARENT...

- do we believe that our marriage is the foundation of our family life?
- do we understand that our children will copy the marriage we show them each day?
- do we agree with the 3 "bedrock understandings"?
- are we as wives submitting to our husbands as to the Lord?
- are we as husbands loving our wives as Christ loved the church?

"It is only by God's Spirit that we can live in God's marriage design." —Dave & Linda Halse

MY PRAYER: "Father, thank You for

Amen.

ESSENTIAL #10: EPHESIANS 6:1-24

Your Family – Love and War

Children, Mothers and Fathers, Work, Warfare, Paul's Blessing



In **Essential #10**, Paul completes his exhortation to ***"walk worthy of the calling we have received"*** by addressing children, fathers, workers, and employers. He concludes the epistle with instructions on spiritual warfare and prayer, personal greetings, and a final benediction.



PARENTING PITFALL

WE need the word of God and prayer! They are indispensable for successful parenting! Other parenting books, ideas, and tips may be helpful but nothing can replace the power and wisdom of God as He 'Fathers' us as parents through His Spirit and His word.

Verses 1-9 – *Submission continued – At Home and Work*

How should children, workers and masters "submit to one another"?

1 "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother" – which is the first commandment with a promise – 3 "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Paul writes, ***"obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*** Obeying parents is the ***right*** thing to do. It's important to note that in verse 1, ***"in the Lord"*** is a phrase that reminds us of a similar phrase in Ephesians 5:22 where Paul urges wives to submit to their husbands ***"as to the Lord."*** Children obey "in the Lord" as an act of submission to God, serving Him by obeying parents.

Wise parents know that children and teens go through stages of development. Young children's brains process in concrete, black and white thinking patterns. Teens are developing more abstract thinking patterns. A child is more likely to obey without argument or hesitation; teens are moving toward independence and beginning to question and think for themselves. As a teen's adult thinking style begins to emerge parents should adjust how they communicate with their teen. Parents will still insist on obedience but should also be aware that their teens will question why and how. Their questioning is evidence of their intellectual, moral, and emotional development toward adulthood. Parents must begin to allow a teen to think for him or herself but expect them to continue to demonstrate a spirit of obedience and respect.

This is an important quote from *The Five Love Languages of Teenagers* by Gary Chapman. "Parents who wish to be an influential part of their teen's reasoning process must shift from monologue to ***dialogue***, from preaching to ***conversation***, from dogmatism to ***exploration***, from control to ***influence***. Parents who fail at this critical stage may well be ***estranged*** from their children for years and see them ***struggle*** with finding their place in the world."

Secondly, Paul says that children must ***honour*** their mother and father. In the 10 Commandments, Ex. 20: 1-17, the 5th Commandment is the first one that comes with a promise – a long, enjoyable life on earth. ***To obey parents is right; to honour them is beneficial in life.***

Is there an age limit? Should adult children obey and honour their parents? Paul gives no end date but he says, ***"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh"***. (5:31) In marriage, spouses ***"leave"*** their parents and ***"unite"*** with their mate. "Leaving" parents would require setting healthy boundaries in families. Building a new marriage would include honouring parents, but not necessarily obeying parents.

1. What are your thoughts on verses 1-3? Were you able to obey and honour your parents ***"in the Lord?"*** How do you help your children and your teens obey and honour you?



[4] ***"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."***

The Amplified Bible ***"Fathers, do not irritate and provoke your children to anger – do not exasperate them to resentment – but rear them (tenderly) in the training and discipline and the counsel and admonition of the Lord."***

To ***"exasperate"*** is to so frustrate a person that they lose control and go into rage. This will damage a relationship. Fathers are to provide Christ-like leadership, leading with both firmness and tenderness. Fathers are sensitive to their child, not provoking undo anger or resentment. Sadly, children and / or parents can hold resentment for years, destroying their relationship.

Fathers are to train and discipline each child in the Lord's instruction. Fathers are not to impose their own agendas or biases but are to be fathers ***"in the Lord."*** Fathers, the best way to achieve this is by being ***"filled with the Spirit,"*** Eph. 5:18.

2. Fathers, what are your thoughts on verse 4? Was your father this kind of father? Do you need to work on being this kind of dad? Moms, how can you help your husband in his role?



Verses 5-9 - *In the Workplace*

5 "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. 7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free. 9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that He who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with Him."

As children grow into their teen and early adult years, Christian parents will need to model and teach **God's design for work**. We will also need to prepare each child to honour and represent Christ in the workplace. In every field of work, and whether our children are called to be workers or managers, God has a way that He wants His people to conduct their work life. In our places of work, we operate in submission to Christ, walking ***"worthy of the calling we have received."*** It's good to remember that the words 'work' and 'worship' come from the same root meaning. The Old Testament Hebrew word ***"avodah"*** means work, worship, and service.

3. Verses 5-9 provide challenging workplace principles. Do you agree? What is your plan to prepare your children for the work world? How can we teach and model these principles?

Verses 10-17 – ***The Armour of God and Spiritual Warfare***



What are Paul's final instructions for the Ephesian church? How will he conclude this amazing book? ***His final word is to be strong.*** We need to be strong as Christian parents today!

Verses 11-18 – ***How to be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power***

11 Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your <u>stand</u> against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to <u>stand</u> your ground, and after you have done everything, to <u>stand</u>.

Fill in the blanks.

11 Put on the _____ of God, so that you can take your _____ against the devil's schemes.

12 For our struggle is not against _____ and _____ (the people in your life) but against the

_____, against the authorities, against the _____ of this _____ world and

against the _____ of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore _____ the full

armour of God, so that when the _____ of _____ comes, you may be able to _____ your ground,

and after you have done everything, to _____ .



14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Fill in the blanks.

14 " _____ then, with the belt of _____ buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of _____ in place, *15* and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the _____ of _____. *16* In addition to all this, take up the _____ of _____, with which you can extinguish all the _____ of the evil one. *17* Take the _____ of _____ and the _____ of the Spirit, which is the _____ of God.

In our ministry, coming alongside marriages and families in crisis, we see unmistakable signs that the enemy is attacking Christian marriages and families with more intensity now than ever before. In the Foreword to this guide, we quoted Ephesians 6:12, 13 from *The Message*.

"This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the devil and all his angels. Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over…you'll still be on your feet."

Are we at war? Who is at war with you as a parent? Who wants to destroy your marriage and family? Who wants to steal your children? What are his evil plans for your family? What is your spiritual battle plan?

What is God's battle plan for us? Notice the word ***"stand"*** is used 4 times in this passage. Our goal in battle is to ***stand against*** the evil one. This is why we put on the full armour of God.

5. What are your thoughts on verses 11-17? Are you aware of spiritual warfare today? Are you spiritually protecting your family, fighting for them by putting on the full armor of God?

Verse 18 - *Prayer*

The last piece of the full armour of God is prayer. We are urged to protect ourselves and our families against the powers of darkness. ***"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions…"***



> *18* ***"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."***

PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT

We worship God in our praying. We give thanks and praise to God at mealtimes, and hopefully moment by moment everyday. We pray with and for our children. We pray for a person, or about a circumstance that's on our mind, petitioning God to help us or guide us through a crisis.

However, as he writes about spiritual warfare, Paul urges us to ***"pray in the Spirit."*** This seems to be a special way of praying in which we call on God on all kinds of occasions, including those times when we and other Christians are engaged in spiritual warfare with Satan and the powers of darkness. Praying in the Spirit is ***focused*** prayer that unites us in deep communion with the Holy Spirit from a deep place in our heart. We pray in the Spirit because we are exposed, we are vulnerable to evil attack, and we desperately need God's protection as never before.

There are times in our family journey when praying in the Spirit is essential because the situation is ***beyond our control***. These could be times of marital crisis, serious illness, financial crisis, teenage rebellion, or loss of faith. In our own parenting, we have become amazingly aware of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit as we have cried out for God's help and protection for our children in crisis times in their life and faith journey.

Praying in the Spirit is not casual prayer. It is desperate prayer; we are desperate for God's help because we, or our children, or a loved one, won't make it through without God. Paul urges us to pray with all kinds of prayers, all the time. We need to pray with alertness, boldness, and faith, understanding that in spiritual warfare we should never be caught off guard.

"and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."

Remember to ***always*** pray for all our brothers and sisters. ***"Keep on praying"*** for one another in the body of Christ. Pray for other Christian parents as well as yourselves. We all need prayer!

6. What are your thoughts on verse 18? Do you personally know what ***"praying in the Spirit"*** means? If not, trust God to deepen your prayer life in the Spirit. Pray for each other with all your heart.

Verses 19-22 - ***Paul's Conclusion to the Ephesian believers is personal.***

[19] "Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, [20] for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should."

Paul asks for prayer that he will be empowered to continue without fear to declare the mystery of the gospel, even while he is in prison as he writes. Notice the word ***"fearlessly"*** is repeated.
What an impressive example of spiritual leadership Paul is for us as Christians and as parents!

[21] Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing.[22] I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

Paul then expresses his emotional concern for the Ephesians. He wants them to be encouraged in knowing how he is and what he is doing. We see his empathy for those whom he leads.

We see in Paul a man who imitates God. (Eph. 5:1) He is a strong Spirit-filled, Spirit-empowered leader as he instructs the church in ***living a life of love***, but he also tenderly models the qualities of Christian relationship in his own personal life. He lives what he teaches.

[23] "Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." The Greek word for brothers and sisters *(adelphoi)* refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God's family. It is just like Paul to offer this final benediction on behalf of the Ephesians, and because the Bible has been given to you and me, we receive Paul's blessing as well – ***to all of you*** - "peace and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." ***[24] Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.***





ESSENTIAL #10

What have you learned?

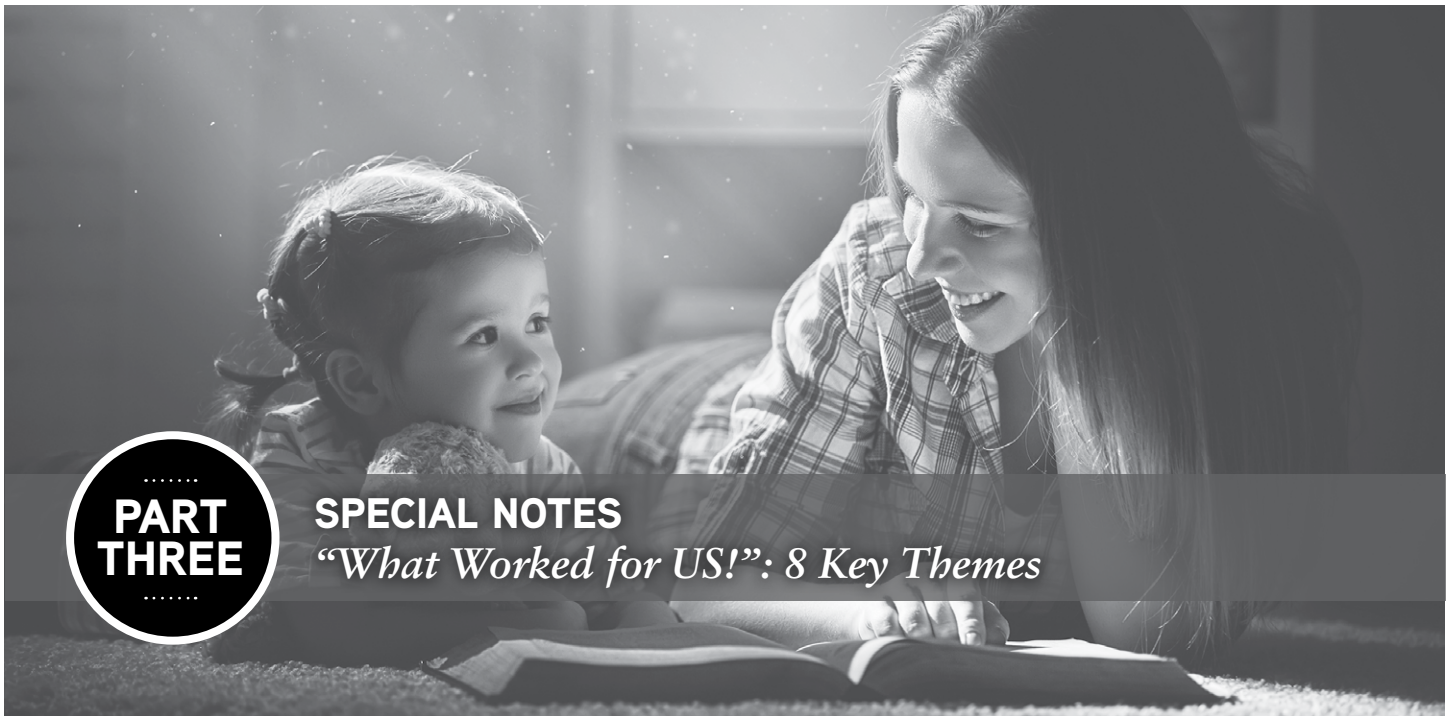
AS A PARENT...

- about helping our children do God's will in obeying and honouring parents?
- about the role of fathers in the Christian home?
- about how God wants us to act in our workplace relationships?
- about how Christians are to be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power?
- about spiritual warfare with the devil and the powers of this dark world?
- about putting on the full armor of God?
- about praying in the Spirit on all occasions and praying for the Lord's people?
- about Paul's example of caring for and blessing the people he is leading in Christ?

"The need to be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power is more important today than ever. We are successful as parents by putting on the full armor of God." —Dave & Linda Halse

MY PRAYER: "Father, thank You for

Amen.



PART THREE

SPECIAL NOTES
"What Worked for US!": 8 Key Themes

PART A: THE WHOLE PERSON: SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY
Understanding the Child

"May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thes. 5:23

Successful parenting requires us to understand and respect the design of God in the creation of humans. Really knowing myself, my spouse, and my children intimately in the three human dimensions is the pathway to successful parenting.

What is the nature of each child? It is essential to gain insight into the nature of the whole person. The whole person is an integration of three dimensions – spirit, soul, and body.

THE SPIRIT is our God-consciousness, the part of a human that connects with God's Spirit. It is the dimension in which we are "born again" or "made alive" in Christ. It contains communion, conscience and intuition. Parenting well will encourage the awakening of each child's spirit.

THE SOUL is the me-consciousness, a trilogy of mind, emotion and will. It is the true self. ***"Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it."*** Prov. 22:6. In the soul is where a person experiences their authentic relationship with God. As we parent our children, we want to identify their true self, to raise them in line with their unique nature.

THE HEART - ***"Guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life."*** Prov. 4:23. In parenting well, we must reach the root causes of a child's behaviour. The heart is the seat of our emotions and our creative

capacity, and the place where God dwells in the believer. ***We understand the soul so we can reach the heart.*** Our hopes and dreams are planted in the soil of our heart. Parenting successfully requires that we learn to touch and encourage the heart of each child.

THE BODY is world-consciousness, created by God and sanctified by God as we grow in faith. It is the ***"temple of the Holy Spirit..."*** 1 Cor. 6:19. Parents guide children in learning to give the members of their bodies to God. It is vital for parents to teach and model proper care for the body. It is essential for parents to guide children and teens in understanding biblical values concerning the nature of intimacy and of their God-given sexuality.

PART B: THE SPIRITUAL FAMILY

9 Qualities of Great Families

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



1. **LOVE**
2. **JOY**
3. **PEACE**
4. **PATIENCE**
5. **KINDNESS**
6. **GOODNESS**
7. **FAITHFULNESS**
8. **GENTLENESS**
9. **SELF CONTROL**

These nine spiritual qualities create the emotional environment we want to permeate our home.

As we learn to live in the Spirit of God, being led and sanctified by Him, He produces His life in us. This "fruit of the Spirit" grows over the years in our spiritual lives as parents. The Spirit gives us the deep desire to see the fruit of the Spirit grow in the hearts and spirits of our children. We live out these spiritual qualities before our children. When we model these nine qualities consistently there is a very good likelihood these spiritual qualities will grow deeply in the lives of our children.

When we connect with God's Spirit we tap into creative spiritual freedom, power, energy, and wisdom that produce the miracles of faith we will all need to see along our marriage and family journey.

PART C: RENEWING THE MIND

Patterns for Thinking and Living

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will." Romans 12:2

Parents want to ensure that each of their children has opportunity to create a life that would be considered successful. We know that our thinking patterns determine our actions and our responses in life. As parents, we need to be aware of the power of the mind. What we are concerned with here is the power of habitual thinking. How we see ourselves, how we see God, and how we see others determines the way we interact with the world. The following quote from *The Marriage Oneness System*, page 25, helps explain this important principle.



"Renewing of the mind" *is called in modern day brain science, 'neuro-plasticity.' God created the brain so that thinking patterns can be changed; its neural pathways can be reconfigured. Renewing the mind means rewiring the brain, the process by which we transform our thinking. Here's our battle: a thought comes to mind. I allow it to stay in my mind if it lines up with my stronghold. Even a biblical truth will be rejected if it goes against my family-conditioned stronghold. Bible truths cannot penetrate our stubborn strongholds. This explains why we get stuck in unbiblical thinking. We are slaves to our strongholds unless and until we decide to intentionally 'demolish' them.*

"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:5.

"God has created us as mature adults with the ability to discern our thoughts and shape our thinking. We choose to accept or reject our impulses. I am solely responsible for the content of my habitual thinking." *The Marriage Oneness System*, Dave and Linda Halse, page 25

How does this apply to us as parents? Early in every child's life we must understand and respect the power of the messages we send into our children's thinking process. Likewise, we as adults understand that our own thinking patterns have been shaped in our family of origin. As parents, it is essential for us to

renew our own thinking according to the truths in God's word. Our own embedded thinking and behaviour patterns from childhood need to be renewed in the Father's love and in biblical truth. Then we can help guard and shape the thinking patterns that will direct the future life experiences of our children.

We pass on the generational thinking patterns of our past, good or bad, to our children and through them to their children. Good parenting is good thinking; we do this by ***"the renewing of our minds"*** and we ***"take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."***

PART D: STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CHILD'S SELF CONCEPT – *Womb to Adult Child*

Our children pass through stages of development from birth to adulthood. Parents need to be continuously aware of how to relate to a child at each stage. Parents have the primary role in the conditioning of their child's emerging self concept. Other influencers are siblings, other family members, teachers, and peers. People and events in our past create a deeply embedded understanding of who we are (soul) and of how we should do life. The child learns patterns of being that provide for the safety of their mind, emotions and will.

THE WOMB We are becoming more aware of the total effect of a mom's physical and emotional state during pregnancy. Along with understanding the physical effects of substance abuse, we are more aware of the effect of the emotional stability of the mother on the fetus. The womb is an environment in which a new life is surrounded with either the blessing of healthy, peaceful, positive thoughts and feelings, or the curse of feelings of anxiety, negativity, or trauma. Each child arrives in the world with a temperament that influences their personality responses in life.

THE INFANT During this stage of intense nurture, touching, and bonding, initial impressions of life are being formed. The infant is the center of the universe. Hopefully, everything the baby needs is supplied – physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. A feeling of security is paramount; at least, this is the way it is in the best of worlds. Early in life, the infant is learning through his or her senses, profound lessons about love and nurture and trust, or the lack of them. The infant is like a 'blank slate' as countless messages are received and imprinted on the heart.

THE CROSSROAD During ages two and three, the toddler steps out of his or her early innocence and into a new stage. The child now understands he or she is separate from mom. The youngster is aware of a new idea, represented by the word "No." The emerging little person needs to know who is in control (has authority) in his or her world. Will the child have its every need and desire fulfilled as was the case in the Infant stage? This stage is the beginning of the battle of wills.

This is the crucial stage in which dad and mom need to be prepared to succeed in their first big parenting test. They must be able to absolutely convince the toddler that he or she is no longer the center of the universe. This is a crossroad in a long journey together; it is almost impossible to undo the lifelong effects of missing the signals and taking the wrong path. This is not the time to be overly permissive parents. This is the time to step into Spirit-led discipline of the child's heart.



THE PATHWAY Between about ages 6 to 12, our children are becoming more self aware and are looking for leaders to follow. Whether it's sports heroes or entertainers, teachers, coaches, or club leaders, they are looking to role models, sometimes positive, sometimes negative influencers.

They are discovering their interests and sorting out their pathway. They are active, enthusiastic, and pliable. Parents must be committed to observing and listening to learn what each child is uniquely interested in. We find creative ways of being in places where we can interact. We are encouraging them and guiding them by creating and sharing meaningful moments in their lives. Modelling and teaching are essential. The pathway chosen in this stage creates lasting impressions on the mind and heart. We return to these memories throughout our lives. This is the stage in which we wholeheartedly invest our time, interest and influence in our child's life.

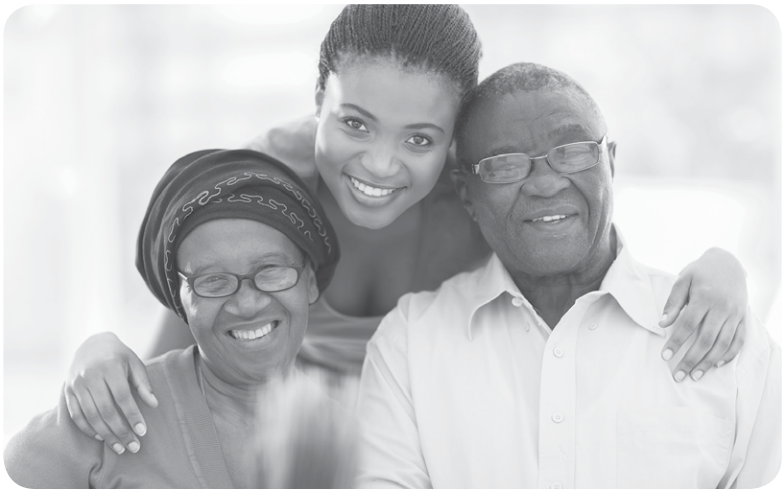
THE BLACK HOLE Teenagers! By age 13, the change has begun. Something very new and strange is happening in your adolescent child. Painfully, it dawns on parents that more and more their kids regard them less and less. They seem to fade in and out of our world while simultaneously they are forging stronger bonds with their peers. This is the child's stage of searching beyond the familiar to discover more of their unique identity. They do this by becoming independent of their parents. This stage will persist into the later teens and early 20's. Depending on how wide the gap gets between parents and teens, parents may be asking themselves, "where did we go wrong?"

Parents, hold onto your teen's heart. Listen and be an influence. Learn to adjust to this teenage stage by changing your communication style with your teen. Learn to do less telling and more asking, less preaching and more conversation, less monologue and more dialogue, and less control and more influence. You can keep the communication connection healthy. If the relationship stays healthy you will get your child back, usually in the early 20's. It will help if you reflect on the way you were with your parents when you were a teen. Be empathetic, but have good boundaries. You are the parent, and you have the God-given authority in your home.

SEPARATION AND INDEPENDENCE Your child will emerge from the Black Hole and return. However, a new stage hits with sudden and cruel emotional force. The deepest feeling of separation and loss is about to take place. Your child is leaving. He or she is about to get married, or leave for higher education, or begin a career. They are emotionally leaving and parents are confronted with the harsh reality that their beloved children are no longer their "kids." There is a painful breaking of the everyday connection we have worked so hard for over so many years.

The new adult is emerging. As exciting as this is for young adults, it can be a very difficult transition for mom and dad. It is normal and it is necessary, but it can hurt deeply for a time. It is known as the "empty nest."

Parents need to have insight and courage to watch their kids leave the nest successfully. We want to be appropriately engaged and helpful, but not to interfere in their lives unless invited. ***"A man will leave his father and mother and …"*** Genesis 2:24. It's important for parents to be prepared for this emotional blow. It comes as a deep loss and it brings grieving with it. Parents need to acknowledge their changing roles and grieve the loss well. Their kids are no longer at home when they lock the door at night. Living in a "Wonderland" of vacations and sharing family meals as a growing family are now a collection of good memories. Parents, if we respond to this stage with grace we will have a wonderful future with our adult children and their children.



FRIENDSHIP When we have found our way through these stages and have been able to maintain a healthy relationship with our children, with who they have become, and with those whom they have chosen to marry, we are in for a great reward.

Our journey of 'growing great kids' has resulted in adding some amazing new adult people to the world. Furthermore, these people will become the kind of parents we have raised them to be. They then will know how to reproduce the love, truth and grace they learned from their parents in the lives of their kids. And in the end, our adult children may become our closest and dearest friends for the rest of our lives.

While passing through these stages we all become who we are.
We become conditioned to open or close to
our own potential for inner greatness.
From the warmth of the womb to the responsibility of mature adulthood,
as parents, what we give our kids returns to us.

PART E: 10 GOALS FOR GROWING GREAT KIDS

Uniqueness, Nurture, Affirmation, Support, Freedom, Reality, Honesty, Failure, Correction, Dignity & Respect

We have selected these 10 goals for parenting, along with key tips for each goal.

GOAL 10: UNIQUENESS

Each child is a unique, one of a kind human being. Parents who spend **quality time** and who practice **active listening** develop a strong sense of what is in the **heart** of each child. No two siblings are alike. Get to know each one.

Work on developing a strong sense of ***communion*** with each child. This will help a parent intuitively know what each child needs through each stage of development.

By paying attention, we ***earn*** both the right and the skill to communicate well with our child in critical times or in times of conflict in our parent-child relationship.

KEY POINTS:

- Each child has a unique spirit and soul and processes life accordingly
- Communicate that he or she has special qualities that no one else has
- Discover, celebrate their distinctive qualities
- Never compare or say, "I wish you were like …"
- Don't try to change your child into someone ***you*** want them to be

GOAL 9: NURTURE

Humans experience the need for nurture in different ways at the beginning of life and throughout.

Mothers are natural nurturers but fathers also nurture their sons and daughters in different ways. Husbands and wives nurture one another in **marriage**.

Children who receive adequate and appropriate nurture are **secure** in their own hearts and minds and they will be able to **mature** emotionally and mentally and become ready for the challenges of adulthood. Humans need nurture in spirit, soul, and body.

KEY POINTS:

- Gentleness
- Touch
- Tenderness
- Balance between asking and telling
- Avoid yelling and angry words
- Soothing words
- Lots of hugging
- Communicating
- Active listening
- Quietness
- Good nutrition
- Sleep, exercise
- Lots of "I love you"
- Quality time together

GOAL 8: AFFIRMATION

Being **verbally** affirmed in who we are and what we do is essential to emotional and mental development.

Speak positives to a person as often as possible. When a **behaviour** is unacceptable we allow our lack of affirmation to be felt, along with appropriate correction.

The power of positive speaking is immense in a growing person. It brings security, confidence and courage. Words bring great deeds to life and are the wings of greatness in us.

KEY POINTS:

- Positive attitude, positive words
- Always build the child up with your words
- Know what they need to hear to encourage them
- Be careful what you say when you are speaking in anger
- Discipline – be kind, firm; love the child, correct the behaviour
- Don't be judgmental; be empathetic and humble
- Ask permission to talk to your teen when there is a problem to address, be **respectful**
- Build the teen's **self-esteem** with words, but also learn to set good **boundaries** in your relationships

GOAL 7: SUPPORT

Affirmation is verbal; support is action oriented. Line up your mindset and actions in the interest of your child. Without affirmation and support a child is dragged down by self doubt.

Support is the collection of practical things we do for each child. To give support is to show confidence in him or her. When a child feels supported they can achieve goals and take on challenges. The child grows into an independent problem solver when they know they are supported.

Remember, don't do for a child what they can do for themselves, but help when they need it.

KEY POINTS:

- Pay attention to your child's hopes, dreams, and conversations.
- Encourage each child to learn who they are in their strengths and weaknesses, and in their personality type
- Teach a child to think big and believe in him or herself
- Help your child to achieve their goals
- Be at games, events, practices, and performances,
- Enjoy their company; spend quality time with each child
- Take each child out for a treat or date regularly
- Have fun with your child but don't be their friend until they are adults. You are their authority as they grow up.

GOAL 6: FREEDOM

We want our kids to choose wisely as they grow up. To accomplish this goal, a child will need a sense of freedom. Freedom means giving the opportunity to choose in appropriate situations. With the opportunity to choose comes the growing sense of being responsible.
It is essential that humans can take responsibility for their actions as teens and adults.

In freedom, we develop a healthy balance between independence and caring for others. When kids are ready to leave the nest, parents are blessed as they see them fly on their own.

KEY POINTS:

- Encourage your child to try new things
- Challenge each child to think and problem solve
- Avoid doing things for them that they can do themselves
- Make sure they can do a task (chunk it) before you expect them to do it
- Make sure they finish tasks well
- Give choices, healthy boundaries, firm guidelines
- Open communication about choices and consequences

GOAL 5: REALITY

Proverbs 6:22. ***"Raise up a child in his own way, and when he is old he will not depart from it."***

Always assess your child's interests and abilities realistically. Adjust your expectations / standards accordingly. Each child needs proper self confidence.

How we apply our expectations for each unique child should reflect the nature of the child's spirit and personality. Our God-given intuition, coupled with prayer, guides us in knowing what will either motivate or exasperate our children.

We cannot expect unrealistic performance from a child simply because they are our offspring. Encourage each child to develop their potential within their own sphere of interest and ability. ***Be guided by God's Spirit.***

KEY POINTS:

- Assess and know your child. Be vigilant and realistic in your assessment
- Set, and re-set goals
- Use 'chunking' in learning new ideas and skills. Growth builds step by step.
- Celebrate each success
- Don't compare your child's progress to other children
- Communicate an "I can" message always
- Don't live vicariously through your child
- Go online and find out about ***'Multiple Intelligence Theory.'*** Identify your child's 'intelligence.' Apply these principles

GOAL 4: HONESTY/INTEGRITY

Nurture, Affirmation, Support, and Freedom are goals that help encourage a pattern of personal growth in the child's heart and mind. There should be no attempt to deceive the child, only to plant seeds that will bring a harvest of good results.

We know that children are profoundly able to see into the adult heart. They are highly sensitive to insincerity and dishonesty. Some parents wrongly think they can be less than honest with their kids or with other adults when their kids are present.

The long-term results of a lack of integrity can be disastrous in a young life since honesty is so foundational to a child's developing value system.

KEY POINTS:

- Children see our heart
- Parents are role models of honesty
- Don't lie or cheat – it will show up in the behaviour patterns of your children
- Always speak the truth in love
- Avoid false compliments, your kids will resent them
- Be consistent, sincere and authentic
- Don't ask your kids to lie for you, like saying, "he's /she's not home" when you are
- The truth will set you free

GOAL 3: FAILURE

At every age, dealing with failure in our lives is difficult. We don't want our kids to experience failure.

However, we all must taste failure at times. The 'silver lining' is this: failure is an ingredient in building maturity and leadership in a person. Unique character qualities are formed as we help our children learn how to respond to failure. Failure produces resilience.

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." James 1:2-4

KEY POINTS:

- Use tough times to teach tough lessons
- Help your child process each failure or disappointment. In love, prayerfully talk through the situation
- How can we learn from this?
- Explain how failure makes us strong
- See a setback as opportunity
- Re-set your goals
- Don't interfere but be there to help
- Character, maturity and resilience are built in times of adversity or testing

GOAL 2: CORRECTION

The biblical approach to parenting is generally a very positive one. However, we must give clear instruction when inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour of a child must be corrected.

How do we love and affirm our children while disciplining them? To discipline or rebuke a child is one of the most loving and essential investments parents will make in guiding the personal growth of their children.

Children are not born with boundaries. As parents, we must instill appropriate boundaries in their hearts and minds. If we do this well, our kids will have the foundation they need to mature as well-adjusted, spiritually-oriented adults with wonderful marriages and families of their own.

See important notes on correction and discipline below in Part F.

KEY POINTS:

- Pray, ask for God's help and direction
- Be clear in your own mind about the reasons for correction and appropriate consequences
- Explain why the correction is necessary
- Never correct in anger, be in control of your emotions
- Correct a child in private, not in public
- Maintain full eye contact, do not speak unless you have it
- Be quiet and firm, and with eye contact, seek to reach your child's heart (conscience)

GOAL 1: DIGNITY & RESPECT

The first 9 goals will culminate in raising children blessed by great parenting.

Great parenting results in the presence of a growing sense of **spirituality** in your children which is seen in the giving of **dignity and respect** to others.

When a person is raised in the knowledge they are loved and valued and worthy, they will be empowered to become a river of **God's love** and **blessing to others** in their world.

This kind of life in people is what God's kingdom looks like on earth.

KEY POINTS:

- Always require respect in your children – for you, for others, for possessions, and for themselves
- Give respect to your children when it's appropriate by applying these 10 goals
- As parents, give each child a sense of their own dignity by lifting them up and learning from their lives, be teachable
- Model dignity – be strong but humble, don't be a doormat
- Seek the meekness of Christ, don't be arrogant or prideful
- Be consistent, sincere and authentic
- Always give thanks for everything, lift high the name of Jesus

PART F: MORE GUIDELINES FOR BIBLICALLY SOUND CORRECTION AND DISCIPLINE

"A refusal to correct is a refusal to love; love your children by disciplining them."
Prov. 13:24 (The Message)

The goal of disciplining children is to restore the oneness or unity in the relationship between the child and the parent. The child must be brought to agreement with the will of the parents.



Children are not born with boundaries. Parents must instill appropriate boundaries in their hearts and minds beginning at an early age. Good boundaries are the foundation for mature, well-adjusted, spiritually-oriented adults with healthy marriages and families of their own.
Misbehaviour and rebelliousness begin to emerge around age two. Parents must be prepared to use appropriate correction and discipline at this critical time. Appropriate correction and discipline will save yourself and your child years of heartache later.

When to correct your child –
when there is a lack of: obedience, respect, or responsibility.



TYPES OF CORRECTION METHODS

There are different discipline methods: a stern verbal reprimand, withdrawing an object or privilege, time-out, or spanking. Use a form of discipline proportionate to the misbehaviour.

Whatever the method, the essential point of correction is that you **reach the child's heart** so that he or she is genuinely **remorseful and repentant**. If the child's heart is not reached and his or her mind changed, the bad behaviour will likely continue or escalate.

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE NEED FOR CORRECTION OCCURS:

1. With eye contact, describe the misbehaviour to the child
2. Quietly and firmly, insist that the child say "I'm sorry" and ask for your forgiveness
3. If this occurs and the child is sincere, give your forgiveness in words, hugs and kisses
4. If the child is not submitting to your requests, calmly repeat your words. Say also that you love him or her but that their behaviour is unacceptable and must be corrected
5. If they refuse to submit, state what the consequence will be
6. Give patient warnings for an appropriate amount of time. Be in control of your emotions
7. If the child continues to refuse your warnings, you must act
8. Pray from the beginning to the end of the correction process



We know the correction is working when the child comes to a place of remorse; they are truly sorry for their actions. They are now ready to submit to your authority as parent. You are not punishing them; you are communicating with their God-given conscience. Pray as you do this.

IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT SPANKING

Spanking is the act of last resort. If verbal reprimand, withdrawing an object or privilege, a time-out, or any other consequence can bring them to surrendering their will to yours, use it. If your child is not truly remorseful and repentant you have not yet reached their heart with any of the above actions. You must reach their heart. **Spanking is not punishment** but it is a message to the child that you insist they change their 'mind' and come into agreement with your will as their parent. This is how God corrects us as His children. God will get our attention through whatever measure He needs to bring our will into line with His, because He loves us!

Some parents say they will not spank because they have been beaten or abused as a child. What happened to them is not what we refer to as spanking. Others won't spank because they are afraid they will damage their relationship with their child. Some people think spanking will teach a child to hit others. Done properly and prayerfully, spanking will not have any of these results. Spanking is NOT beating or hitting. If you need to spank your child here are some important things to remember:

1. Never spank a child in anger or frustration.
2. Never spank a child who is too old to put over your lap.
3. Be quiet and in control of your thinking and feelings.
4. Be very careful to spank only on the buttocks, no other part of the body; spanking is not slapping or hitting.
5. Spank a child only over your lap and on their buttocks.
6. You are not spanking hard; you are not causing physical pain or harm to the child.
7. As you spank the child's buttocks use your open hand and be sensitive. You want the child to feel your hand but you are not inflicting pain. Do not spank bare skin.
8. This is a caring act, not an angry or punishing or violent act.
9. Pray for help and direction from God as you spank. This is His child and you are His hand.
10. When your child cries, it should not be because of feeling physical pain. You will sense initially their tears are coming from a place of defiance. Their body will be stiff with determination to not give in. The crying begins as angry defiance but as you carefully persist, the crying will change from defiance to remorse, and you will recognize the difference. When the child is truly sorry you will have reached their heart and their will, and he or she will surrender their will to yours. Their body language softens to accept their wrong-doing. They express repentance, and agree with you as their authority.
11. The goal is to bring their will into agreement with yours as their godly authority.
12. You are not breaking their spirit or damaging your relationship or teaching them to hit.
13. When they are repentant, embrace them, hold them to your chest and tell them how much you love them. This is a restoring and bonding time. They will melt into you.
14. The best news is that if you spank properly at an early age you may never need to spank the child again because the child knows you will insist on being their authority and you will not yield to their desire for authority or control.



PART G: ATTITUDE, PRINCIPLES, TRAINING FOR PARENTS

Successful parenting requires us to develop our APT's. APT parents develop their APT's. These are attitudes, principles and training that have served us well on our journey as parents.



Attitudes	*Principles*	*Training*
Possibility thinking – FAITH	Harvest thinking	Goal setting
Courage	Forgiveness	Emotional healing
Trust	Unconditional love	Personality/ Gift Types
Vision	Wisdom	Multiple Intelligence Theory
Determination	Resilience	Failure
Teachable-ness	Investment (meekness)	Self-esteem

ATTITUDES

Possibility Thinking – Possibility thinking is having the mindset of faith. It is vital. It allows us to dream. It embraces new ideas which will find a home in our thinking. What God may want for us, though apparently impossible, may in fact be both possible and essential in our future.

Courage – Anything worth hoping or fighting for will require us to press into courage. Courage grows in the heart. We need courage in fighting for our families. Courage creates the resolve needed to face the risks in growing into maturity in Christ. Successful parenting is courageous.

Trust – We cannot achieve inner growth without trusting God and the people in our lives that He brings to walk with us. Through God's Spirit we grow in the community of Christ.

Vision – Faith, seeing the big picture, looking beyond and above our present circumstances, and believing in what is not yet visible, are key aspects in taking right action as we follow the Spirit.

Determination – When we know in our mind and heart that a certain action is right, we resolve to persevere and see it through, and we find in the end we did not do it alone. God is in it.

Teachable-ness – We commit ourselves to life-long learning. Growing in the greatness of Christ requires the humility and willingness to admit we may be wrong, so we can then get it right.

PRINCIPLES

Harvest Thinking – We are accustomed to instant gratification in life today. However, in many important life issues the 'law of the harvest' is operative and dictates there is a time for waiting – for seeding, for cultivating, and, in time, for the harvest. God's maturing process in our journey is essential in growing us into the people He can trust with a great harvest.

Forgiveness – When we are harmed or victimized by someone, we are called by God to release the offender from their emotional debt to us, give the offense to God, restore the relationship.

Unconditional love – This is the highest form of love, sourced in God, and the foundation of a God-blessed



relationship. No matter what is said or done, our commitment is to love without reservation in the power of the Spirit. This is the spirit of the marriage vows.

Wisdom – Wisdom is insight into people and situations, seeing root issues, the real source of unhealthy living and relationships. We see life from God's and the other person's perspective.

Resilience – We are knocked down, but not knocked out. We are impacted by the trials of life, disappointed, betrayed, discouraged, but we don't give up. With God's help, we "stand" (see Ephesians 6: 10-19). The result is a submissive heart.

Investment (meekness) – We can't afford to always be right, or first. We are given opportunities to consider others before ourselves. We do this by letting go of our personal rights. We invest ourselves in lifting others up, and in doing this we build great relationships to the glory of God.



TRAINING

Goal setting – Goals must be defined, reasonable, flexible, and re-set at times. We learn to organize vision into bite-sized pieces of activity with timelines. These we might call strategies.

Emotional healing – Most people are damaged emotionally because of hurtful experiences early in life. Things said or done are embedded in our hearts and cause wounding and negative memories that block our way to mature adult responses. These embedded patterns undermine our ability to build close or intimate relationships. Ask God to bring His healing into your heart.

PERSONALITY TYPES

Understanding a Child's Motivations

In building relationships, it is important to gain specific insight into our own personality type, and that of others. As we understand how we process life in relating to others, we will be able to grow together in unity through our diversity.

Try this 'True Colours' based personality assessment yourself and with each child. You may contact us to learn more on building family relationships using True Colours.

Green	*Gold*	*Orange*	*Blue*
Knowledge *Intellect* *Planning*	*Work* *Duty* *Organized*	*Action* *Results* *Fun*	*Emotion* *Relationships* *Empathy*
Idea-centered	Task-centered	Fun-centered	People-centered
Thinker	Right and wrong	Starter	Compassion
Problem-solver	Order	Decisive	Relationship
Ingenious	Traditions	Just do it	Transparency
Expertise	Organized	Impact	Sensitivity
Analytical	Steadfast	Spontaneity	Creative
Individualistic	Dependable	Skillfulness	Idealistic
Complex	Punctual	Zest for life	Seek significance
Abstract thinker	Prepared	Freedom	Notice nuances
Competence	Work ethic	Excitement	Affection
Intelligence	Heritage	Negotiator	Identity
Invents Structure	Avoids risk	Trouble shooter	Authenticity
Precise wording	Reputation	Adventure	Meaning is key
Global thinker	Reserved	Performer	Enthusiasm
Truth	Maintains	Opportunity	Personal growth
Accuracy	Security	Optimism	Harmony
Explanation	Service	Risk taker	Empathy
Efficiency	Dedication	Bored easily	Encouraging
High standards	Responsibility	Open-minded	Belonging
Technology	Loyalty	Sociable	Recognition

Dave & Linda Halse, Relationships Support Ministries, Inc. 2010

Your 'Colours': 1st _____ 2nd _____ 3rd _____ 4th _____

Each child's 'Colours': 1st _____ 2nd _____ 3rd _____ 4th _____

Multiple Intelligence Theory – Each person is intelligent, but intelligent in different ways. We learn well in one area, not so well in others. Howard Gardner describes 8 intelligences: visual – spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, bodily - kinesthetic, logical – mathematical, naturalistic, and musical. This knowledge helps us better appreciate ourselves and our children in our strengths and weaknesses and improves how we relate with others.

Failure – One of life's great trainers is failure. We need to learn how to respond positively and constructively to this most difficult but helpful reality of human experience. For more on failure see Part E above.

Self-esteem – This area of training is essential to success in life and relationships. We see the damaging results of low self esteem in lives and relationships. Each of us must come to an appropriate understanding of our own worth as a child of God, loved and redeemed by the Father through faith in Christ. We embrace self-worth in our relationship with our Creator Father through faith in Christ's sacrifice on the cross for us. We are His workmanship.

PART H: COMMUNICATING BIBLICAL SEXUALITY AND INTIMACY WITH YOUR CHILD AND TEEN

The following are notes we provide in our ***Communicating Biblical Sexuality to Children and Teens workshop***. We are available to speak to groups about this important issue.

Workshop on BIBLICAL SEXUALITY AND GODLY PARENTING
—Dave & Linda Halse, RSM

OVERVIEW: The purpose of this workshop is to provide ***biblical Guidelines*** for raising children and teens in a sexually confused world. God's design for marriage is clear. ***"A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh."*** Gen 2:24

Design – Problem – Solution – Application

THE DESIGN FOR GODLY MARRIAGE – *Getting it right*

As Christian parents, we need to be clear in what the Bible teaches about sexuality.

a. Marriage is a relationship of **Total Intimacy** - binds two people in ***spirit, soul, and body***.
b. Regular sexual union is ***essential*** - God creates us male and female for intimate sexual connection in the marriage relationship – this speaks to your child's emerging sexuality as teens
c. ***Quality*** of intimate life is an indicator of the ***health*** of a marriage (under normal conditions)

What do we mean by 'Intimacy' and 'Sexuality'?

Intimacy is:

a. created by God to be the most intense form of ***closeness*** between a man and woman
b. two separate people becoming "one flesh." Gen. 2:24
c. glue that bonds a marriage relationship, creates unity in marriage
d. a picture of the intimate spiritual relationship between Christ and His bride

Sexual union is:

a. deepest, most intense intimate connection between a husband and wife
b. God-given attraction, sensation, and sexual urge pull us toward each other
c. mutual expression of vulnerability, release of tension, and mutual pleasure
d. bonding of husband and wife moment to moment and for a lifetime
   "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame." Gen. 2: 24, 25.



THE PROBLEM – THE WORLD VIEW ON SEXUALITY

As Christian parents, we need to be aware of what the world is telling our children and teens.

The anti-biblical, confusing world view our children are faced with:

- It is normal to use our sexuality in whatever way we choose. We are entitled to sexual freedom
- Entering marriage as a virgin (sexual purity) is an old fashioned, unrealistic idea to commit to
- Experimenting with sex is normal and expected in our culture
- Sexual orientation is not important to God. My sexuality is mine to express as I please

As Christian parents, we must be prepared to help our children and teens understand sexuality.

- Our children and teens are developing as sexual beings. They are growing into, and eventually will possess and learn to manage, their ***own*** sexuality.
- If our children do not learn a biblical understanding of their sexuality in God's design for marriage they may fall short of the abundant life in Christ we want for them
- Parents MUST faithfully teach and model ***biblical principles*** of intimacy and sexuality
- What our children learn will influence their intimate lives and extend to their children

SOLUTION – BE AUTHENTIC!

Understand and obey God's design, teach and be an example

AUTHENTICITY - The quality of sexual intimacy in our ***own*** marriage is the foundation for guiding our children and teens toward healthy sexual experience.



UNDERSTANDING *BIBLICAL* INTIMACY AND SEXUALITY: SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY

- "one flesh." Intimacy flows from our spiritual life into our thinking, feeling, and bodily responses
- based in God's word and in submission to Christ and to our mate - if we are struggling with intimacy in our marriage, get help! It is not good to deprive each other. See 1 Corinthians 7:1-5

SPIRITUAL INTIMACY – *PRAYER* AND PROTECTION

Prayer is deeply communicating with God. Intimacy is deeply communicating with each other.

- God is present in everything we do. Praying in quiet intimacy invites the presence of the Spirit and sets our spirits free and we enter into the paradise of total oneness.

APPLICATION – COMMUNICATING BIBLICAL SEXUALITY TO OUR CHILDREN AND TEENS

OUR CHALLENGE - Ted and Diane Roberts teach workshops on biblical sexuality. They surveyed their audiences with this question, ***"How many of you had parents who talked to you in depth about sex as you grew up?"*** Only 1 – 2% said their parents taught them about sex in any depth.

They write, "As believers, we absolutely must have a ***framework*** to help us examine our marriage

and our world … we must give believers a clear vision of the God-given gift of their sexuality as followers of Christ." *Sexy Christians*, Ted and Diane Roberts, page 23.

Question: Why are parents feeling blocked in communicating sexuality to their children?

COMMUNICATING INTIMACY AND SEXUALITY

Mothers

- Pre-natal – emotional well-being of mom, music, physical, emotional, mental security
- Infant – nurturing, holding, touching, talking, singing, praying over
- Child – nurture, hold, touch, sing, pray with, read, cuddle, affirm identity and gender
  Note: children emotionally deprived in early childhood later in life experience intimacy issues.
- Teens – active listening, conversation, hugging, praying, affirming, dates with our kids, discussions about sexuality, friendship, and other adolescent issues

Fathers

- Loving protection, tenderness, firmness, discipline, setting boundaries, security, confidence
- With infant and toddler – father represents the world outside the mom and infant connection
- With Children – Touch, listening, holding, hugs, rough-housing, games, limit video games
- With Teens – listening, conversation, hugging, praying, affirming, dates, discussing sexuality
- Message to son: "You have what it takes to be a man."
- Message to daughter: "You are captivating, you are my treasure."
- Sharing activities – hobbies, interests, sports, take to games and activities, etc.
- When a daughter is dating a boy, her father "has a coffee" (a heart to heart talk) with the boy

PARENTS: make sure you are ***experiencing*** God's design for intimacy in your own marriage, then you will ***understand*** how and what to say. If you understand and experience biblical intimacy for yourself, you are better prepared to ***communicate*** sexuality to your children.

BOTTOM LINE: ***Be Prepared, Pay Attention, Be Involved, Speak the Truth in love about intimacy and sexuality, Be Intentional – Pray! Learn! Lead! Talk with and listen to your children at every opportunity.*** You will find more information online. Enter words such as 'Christian parent talking kids sex' into your search engine.

THE LAST WORD

Congratulations! You made it. Here you are on the last page and what have you accomplished? You have succeeded in reading verse by verse through one whole book of the Bible. You have worked with us as we have drawn parenting insights from that special book, Paul's letter to the Ephesian believers. You have shared your thoughts, your hopes and dreams, your concerns and your heart with fellow believers in your own 'neighbourhood' in the body of Christ. As Christian parents, you have gained understanding and encouragement through this journey that will impact your family in new and wonderful ways.

It has been a privilege to lead you in the Spirit through these parenting "Essentials." We have read many parenting books and taken several courses but this writing experience has been unique. We dared to take the word of God at face value and we let it speak to our minds and hearts. This is the only parenting book we know of that starts with and grows out of the words of Scripture, rather than from an author's own thoughts and life experience.

Most books tell us what the author wants us to know, based on his or her knowledge backed up with Bible verses. Our testimony is that the Holy Spirit through Paul's letter to the Ephesians has exploded our minds with fresh insights into parenting God's way. God reveals himself to us in new ways through the mystery and power of the Bible and by the teaching of his Spirit. God has enriched our understanding of how He would have us lead our families.

So, the first word and the last word belong to God. In this ever darkening world, we urge you to live in the light, love God, love His word, love your family, and ***"Be strong in the Lord and in His might power."*** Ephesians 6:10

Blessings in his name,

—Dave & Linda Halse

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About the Authors

Dave and Linda Halse are founding Directors of Relationships Support Ministries. They are marriage and family coaches and speak in churches, conferences, and retreats. They lead Family Life and Team Building Workshops at Fair Havens Conference Centre and Muskoka Bible Centre. They are retired educators with combined classroom experience of sixty years. Dave has Masters degrees in Education and in Divinity and is a certified Biblical Life Coach. Dave and Linda have been married 45 years and have 2 married children and 5 grandchildren.

RELATIONSHIP SUPPORT MINISTRIES (RSM) is a 'not for profit' charity incorporated in the province of Ontario. Our mission is 'Restoring God-centered unity in marriages and families.' We do this through coaching in our living rooms and teaching in seminar, workshop, and retreat settings.

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