

# Getting to the Heart of Parenting

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Discussion Guide to be used with the conference on DVD  
(Ten 25 minute sessions on 3 DVDs)  
for Church-wide Events, Classes,  
Small Groups, or Personal Study

*This is a resource of:*

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# GETTING TO THE HEART OF PARENTING

## INTRODUCTION

The following study guide provides practical discussion and application based on a biblical perspective of parenting. The best way to interact with the material is within a small group or class where discussion with others can stimulate ideas and questions you may not have otherwise considered. You will probably find in your discussions and answers that your trials are not unusual, and a small group can provide encouragement and accountability. If you do not have a small group to participate in, consider inviting others to join you in going through this material. Nonetheless, this material can also be beneficial as an independent study.

The study is intended for you to think deeply and honestly to the questions posed. Take the time to examine your life, your thoughts, and your feelings; and take the time to write down your answers and thoughts. It is useful to write out answers and not just think about them. Writing deepens and clarifies your thinking, and writing it down acts as a stronger form of commitment than just saying it in your mind. You will also gain the most from the study by being honest and open about your struggles, your disappointments, and your weaknesses. Growth and freedom come from the truth and the light; not from continuing to hide or pretend.

A time of prayer after answering the application questions can be a good way to reinforce them and to make further application. Prayer can be a way for you to make a commitment to God with what you want to apply and a good way to hear what God may be saying to you.

As you share your thoughts, feelings, struggles, and accomplishments, speak humbly, honestly, and in love. We all have sin; we all have great value in God's sight; and we all are on a journey growing and becoming more like Christ. May God bless you greatly!

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# GETTING TO THE HEART OF PARENTING

## SESSION 1: GIVING OUR CHILDREN A SPIRITUAL CULTURE

### Opening Discussion:

What do you think is God's purpose for the family?

Is there a "right way" to parent?

**Scripture:** Judges 2:6-11

Notes:

Getting to the  
Heart  
of Parenting

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What is a Family?



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**The Family:  
God's Primary Learning  
Community**

- Theological Community



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**Children Are:**

- Revelation Receivers



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**Key Points:**

- Our children will be acculturated to something; they will not remain cultureless.
- The family is the primary learning community.
- The family is the primary theological community.

- Parents do not share the glory of God with their children when they themselves do not see the glory of God.
- Your children cannot know everything there is to know about life without God's revelation.

**Review Questions:**

1. What is the primary learning community in God's eyes?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why is it absolutely necessary to talk about God within your family?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What is the purpose of speaking to our children about God?

**Group Discussion Questions:**

1. What keeps parents from making their family a "theological community"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What things in our children's lives are competing with our values? Who do you think is winning?

**Personal Reflection:**

1. How well do you communicate the awe of God to your children?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What prevents you from speaking about God to your children in the course of the day?

3. Do you think you spend enough time speaking about God and his word to your children? Do you spend enough time with God and his word? What can you do to increase this time?

### **Getting to the Heart of your Children**

1. Ask your children what most amazes them about God. Do they have an answer? Do they struggle to find an answer? Does their answer reflect what amazes *you* about God or what they have been taught by others?
2. Share with your children something that amazes you in nature. Ask them for something that amazes them in nature.
3. Share a favorite biblical story with your children. Explain why it is a favorite of yours. Ask them to share a favorite Bible story and explain why it is a favorite.
4. Share with your children something God did in your life that was life-changing or amazing.

# **SESSION 2: GIVING OUR CHILDREN A SPIRITUAL CULTURE**

## **Opening Discussion:**

How will you know if you are a successful parent?

What will it look like to have successful children?

## **Scripture:**

Notes:

**Children Are:**

- Revelation Receivers
- Interpreters



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**Children Are:**

- Revelation Receivers
- Interpreters
- Worshippers



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**The Family:  
God's Primary Learning  
Community**

- Theological Community
- Sociological Community
- Redemptive Community

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**Key Points:**

- Children are always thinking and interpreting. They act, however, not on the facts of life but on their interpretation of the facts.
- Children are all worshippers—they will naturally attach their identity to something.
- The family should be a sociological community.
- The family is meant to be a redemptive community.

**Review Questions:**

1. What is the connection between our children being interpreters and parents' responsibility to teach them God's word?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How do our children reveal themselves as worshippers?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. As a social community, what should the family look like?

**Group Discussion Questions:**

1. Why is sacrificial love necessary to a healthy social community?

2. How do we create a redemptive community in our families?

3. How will we know if we are being successful parents?

**Personal Reflection:**

1. How often do you use Scripture to help your children interpret their experiences?

2. How well does your family reflect a social community of sacrificial love? How well do you model sacrificial love to your children?

**Getting to the Heart of your Children**

1. Ask your children, "What is something you would not want to live without? If this were taken away, how do you picture God providing for you?"
2. Ask your children, "What do you think is the most important thing to me?" (Yes, you are asking your children to identify what they think is most important to you).
3. Ask your children if they feel safe to share anything with you?
4. Ask your children, "Is there anything you feel I should ask you for forgiveness?"





**Group Discussion Questions:**

1. What will look, sound and feel different when we parent the hearts of our children and not just their behavior?
2. Why do threatening, manipulating and using guilt not really work?
3. What needs to first happen for your children to be able to confess their own sin?

**Personal Reflection:**

1. Does your parenting and training focus on the hearts of your children or just their behavior?
2. What is your motivation (what is in your heart) that persuades you to use threats, manipulation or guilt with your children?
3. How well do your children respond to your discipline and when you address their sin? Is there something you could do differently that will foster a listening spirit within your child?

**Getting to the Heart of your Children**

1. Read together Luke 6:43-45. Explain how what we say and do is the overflow of our hearts. Give examples from your own life.
2. Discuss with your children: What do you think God wants us to do when we sin?



- If we are not looking at our own hearts as parents, we will turn moments of ministry into a moment of anger; we will personalize it; we will become an adversary; and we will settle for a quick, temporary solution that does not change the heart

**Review/Discussion Questions:**

1. What is probably happening in our own hearts when we are frustrated with having to discipline our child?
2. Why can we look at the sin and conflicts of our children as a positive experience?
3. What needs to happen for these moments of conflict to become moments of ministry?
4. Share a time when you did not see a conflict as a moment of ministry. What was the result?
5. Share a time when you ministered to the heart of your child. What was the result?

**Personal Reflection:**

1. How do you view the moments of conflict and sin that arise with your child?
2. What additional insight do you have regarding the following question from session 3-- What is your motivation (what is in your heart) that persuades you to use threats, manipulation or guilt with your children?

3. What can you start to do so that you do not miss ministry opportunities with your child?  
If you are married, how can your spouse help you?
  
4. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. How does Jesus treat us when we come to him with our sins and weaknesses? How should this inform the way you treat your child in relation to his/her sin and weaknesses?

### **Getting to the Heart of your Children**

Use these questions, in order, next time your child needs correction.

What was going on?

What were you thinking and feeling as it was happening?

What did you do in response?

Why did you do it? What were you seeking to accomplish?

What was the result?

# SESSION 5: 0 TO 5 YEARS: LEARNING TO LIVE UNDER AUTHORITY

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## Opening Discussion:

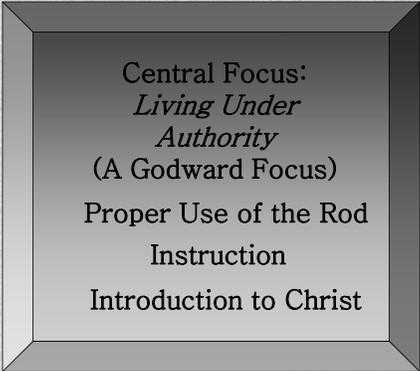
What is the role of authority in our lives?

Think about people who have been or are in authority over you. What characteristics do they have that have made you respect them?

**Scripture:** Ephesians 6:1-3

Notes:

Infancy to Childhood (0—5)



Central Focus:  
*Living Under Authority*  
(A Godward Focus)  
Proper Use of the Rod  
Instruction  
Introduction to Christ

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HONOR

Go Well Long Life

OBEY

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OBEY: A willing submission to my parents that causes me to do what I am told---

*Without challenge*  
*Without Excuse*  
*Without Delay*

HONOR: Treating my parents with respect and esteem because of their God-appointed position of authority.

*Not Addressed as a*  
*Peer*  
*Not Given Commands*

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**Key Points:**

- From age 0-5, a child is developing a worldview, identity, and desires.
- A child needs to learn that they live in a world of authority.
- Parents' authority over children is to teach them how to live under God's authority.

**Review Questions:**

1. What is positive about teaching your child submission to authority?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. We should train our children to live under our authority as a means of teaching them how to live under God's authority. What should it look like to live under God's authority?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What specific things can parents do to model to their children how to show respect?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How will children know whether their parents are submissive to God's authority?

**Personal Reflection:**

1. Are you submissive to God's authority?

2. In what ways have you been good at teaching your children to be under authority? In what ways could you be better?

### **Getting to the Heart of your Children**

There may be a host of issues when it comes to the way your children submit to your authority. Decide on just one area that has been a problem and work to become consistent in what you expect from your child in that area. It could be a mealtime issue, an issue at bedtime, a problem with obeying right away, or a problem with trying to manipulate an instruction. When you discipline, be focused on their heart and not just the behavior.







3. Why and when is spanking appropriate?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Describe the difference between abusive discipline and loving discipline.

**Personal Reflection:**

1. Do you need to confess to your children an error in how you taught them to respect authority?
  
2. Do you need to adjust the manner in which you discipline?
  
3. Do you need to confess to your children times you have not disciplined or disciplined for your own purposes instead of God's?

**Getting to the Heart of your Children**

Think of a consistent issue you will probably need to discipline your children for during this up coming week. Think through the following:

1. Why is it important that this issue be corrected?
2. How successful has your discipline been up to this point?
3. What will be the best way to implement the discipline? How will you show loving discipline?

Pray with your children after disciplining them.

# SESSION 7: AGES 6-12: THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHARACTER

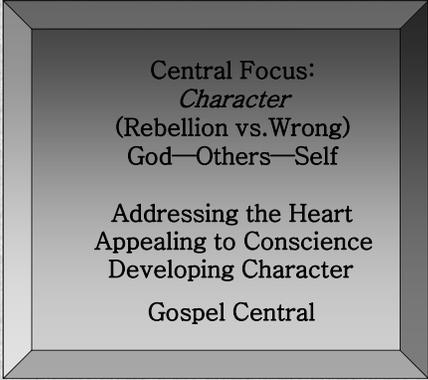
## Opening Discussion:

How do you see a lack of godly character in our culture today? What do you believe are the causes of this?

**Scripture:** 2 Cor 5:15

Notes:

Childhood (6—12)



Central Focus:  
*Character*  
(Rebellion vs. Wrong)  
God—Others—Self

Addressing the Heart  
Appealing to Conscience  
Developing Character

Gospel Central

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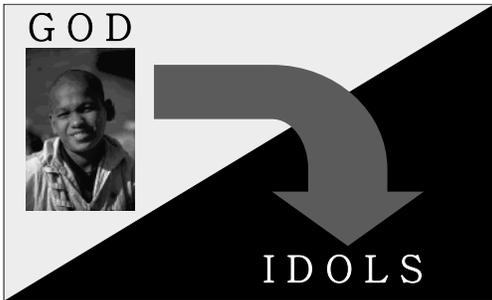
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## Romans 1:25



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## Key Points:

- Not every wrong is a direct rebellion to authority; some wrongs are the fruit of a lack of character.
- Character issues are rooted in the worship of the heart.

**Review Questions:**

1. Who determines what good character is? Why do we rebel against this standard?
  
2. What is the connection between character and worship?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What is required to train our children in character?
  
2. What questions can we be asking our children to reveal their heart and develop good character?

**Personal Reflection:**

1. Does the discipline in your home focus on the development of character?
  
2. What can you begin to do to make character development more a part of your child's training?
  
3. Since you live your spirituality every moment of every day, what do you think your children are learning by your example and teaching?

**Getting to the Heart of your Children**

1. Ask your child, "How do we know how we are supposed to act?"

2. Make a list of biblical character traits with your children. Ask, "Why does God want us to have these traits?"
3. Use a non-conflict time to discuss character issues that are relevant to your child. Create and then discuss a scenario involving sharing or the temptation to lie or to gossip, etc.



**Key Points:**

- Character development is hard work.
- Character is based on a relationship with God.
- Character development in a child begins with the parent's own character.

**Review Questions:**

1. Explain the tools for character development?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How can we evaluate the character of our children?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What is the importance of being honest with ourselves and to our children about our own flaws?

**Personal Reflection:**

1. What tends to capture your heart and desires? What do you have a tendency to worship instead of God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Does the Bible act as a mirror in your life and character?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Are there things you treat as more important than character? How can you shift your priorities so that your children see the importance of character?

**Getting to the Heart of your Children**

1. Speak to others who spend time with your child. Ask them to evaluate the character of your child. What did you learn about your child that you could help them improve upon? What do you think is happening at home and in *your* character that has perhaps caused character problems outside the home?
2. Encourage and support your child to spend time with God each day.



Don't Settle  
for  
Situational Solutions  
and  
Behavioral  
Control!

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This is a Time  
of Awesome  
Opportunity!

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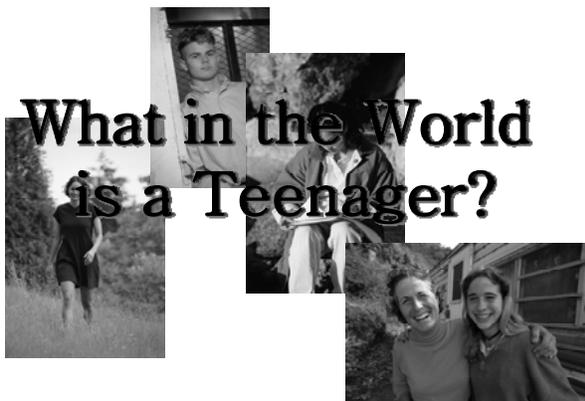
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- The struggles your teen faces will determine the parenting opportunities and parental roles.
- Teens need parents who make wisdom and correction desirable.

**Review Questions:**

1. Why is it important to give your child room to make his/her own decisions during this time?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Explain the difference between a preventative, corrective and protective relationship with a teenager.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What does it mean to be goal-oriented in parenting?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What kinds of decisions are good opportunities for your child to practice decision making?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What are the challenges to correcting and protecting our teens? What are some reasons for taking the responsibility to correct and protect them?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How should we present wisdom and correction to a teen when he/she does not necessarily seek or want it?

**Personal Reflection:**

1. What type of relationship do you have with your teen-aged child?

2. Are you able to provide protection for your child? Who can help you provide protection if necessary?
  
3. Does your child respect your correction? What might you change so that your correction appears beautiful?

**Getting to the Heart of your Child**

1. Ask your child, “How do you feel when I am disciplining or correcting you?” “How do you feel afterward?” “What do I do that makes you feel that way?”
2. Ask your child, “If I could give you understanding in one area of life, what would it be?” If you can give insight to their area, ask if you may share your insight with them.
3. Practice speaking to your teen with humility instead of anger, with grace instead of judgment, with mercy instead of condemnation.



# But What Do I Do about the Everyday Stuff??

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## Key Points:

- Teens believe they are being sheltered from the “good life”.
  - Parents need to show them the beauty of God’s way
- Teens often tend to be unwise about their choice of companions.
  - Parents need to make their home a hospitable place for teens to be welcome.
- Teens are particularly susceptible to sexual temptation.
- Teens focus on the present more than the future.
  - Parents need to help their teen see how consequences are the result of their choices and see how their choices are based on what they most value.
- Teens tend to be blind to their own blindness.
  - Parents need to help their teen see what God wants them to see.
- God will provide what you need to parent well.

## Review Questions:

1. What does it mean to respond to falsehood issues with authority and what is wrong about that approach?
2. What is a “harvest mentality” and how do we teach it to our teen?
3. What is a “treasure mentality”?

## Discussion Questions:

1. How can we help our teens see the beauty of God's way?
2. How can we help our teens combat the sexual temptations of the culture?
3. What do you think you need from God to help you improve how you parent?

**Personal Reflection:**

1. How well do you do at sharing the beauty and truth of God's way? Is your teen seeking God and his kingdom or is your teen seeking worldly pleasures? What truth could you share with your teen to help him/her better understand the pleasures of God's kingdom?
2. How do you feel about your teen's companions? Is your home a place where your teen wants to bring friends?
3. Are you helping your son or daughter to make wise choices in avoiding sexual temptations and making good decisions about their appearance and their desires?

**Getting to the Heart of your Child**

1. Ask God to make you an instrument of his grace in the life of your child.
2. Spend time with your child and one or two of his/her friends. Invite them over or out for something to eat or to an activity. Get to know your child's friends.
3. Think of something you find especially meaningful about your relationship with God. Share it with your family.
4. Ask your son/daughter, "What things are most important to you?"; "What choices are you making now that you think will benefit you in the future?" Discuss their answers.