

Introduction:

The problem:

- Even spiritually committed Christian families are experiencing deep pain and challenges with their children and grandchildren.
- Children are rejecting their upbringing in the areas of faith, identity, and sexuality.
- The family is the central battleground for spiritual warfare.

The command: Walk differently

- Walking worthy of your **CALLING** Ephesians 4:1, 17
- Walking in **LOVE**, like Christ Ephesians 5:2
- Walking as children of **LIGHT** Ephesians 5:8
- Walking not as unwise, but as **WISE** Ephesians 5:15

How?

- By letting your relationship with God—with Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit—be the one central, most important thing that focuses your mind around the truth of how to live. Ephesians 5:15-20
- By applying the instructions for the Spirit-filled life to the family structure. Ephesians 5:21-6:4

The ultimate context:

- The armor of God is detailed immediately after family instructions to frame the family as a primary spiritual battlefield for fighting lies. Ephesians 6:10-18

Fighting for your family

- Identify lies and understand where they come from and what they do.
- Understand that lies make it impossible for children to grow up in a safe, stable, supportive environment where they feel valued, encouraged, and supported.
- Recognize that the most dangerous lies are the ones that you believe to the point where you think it's good.

The family as a witness

- Few things will be more important to show the world the love of Christ than marriages that reflect Jesus and His Church.
- Our mission: To show the world that there is hope by identifying lies in our families and culture, and building Spirit-powered homes that glorify God.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think even spiritually committed families are struggling so much today?
2. What specific "good" pursuit do you feel most tempted to prioritize over your family's spiritual health? How do you recognize when a line has been crossed?
3. How can parents model a vibrant, "Spirit-powered" faith in their homes, rather than just teach a lifeless "moral code"?
4. What is the biggest obstacle that keeps you from making your relationship with God the true "central focus" of your life? What is one small change you could make this week to begin fighting that obstacle?
5. What tangible, everyday ways can a family's routines and relationships serve as a powerful witness to a non-believing friend or neighbor?

Introduction:

Among evangelical couples, what does the research actually say are the biggest issues in their life?"

1. Marriage struggles
2. Parenting in a secular culture

Fighting lies with truth

Lie #1:

When I finally meet "the right person," everything will work out fine.

The truth:

Marrying the right person is **CRUCIAL**, but even with the greatest mate, a successful marriage requires following **GOD'S DESIGN**, putting in the hard work, persevering through difficulties, and relying on the Holy Spirit.

Key verse:

For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.

Hebrews 10:36

Lie #2:

When I experience disappointment, annoyance, and anger toward my spouse, that means I'm "falling out of love" and I may have married the wrong person.

The truth:

CONFLICT and **NEGATIVE** emotions are not only normal, they are essential to learning to **COMMUNICATE** and forgive each other in the process of becoming one.

Key verse:

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

Ephesians 4:32

Don't buy the **LIES**. Do it **GOD'S WAY**.

Discussion Questions:

1. Where do you see this "soulmate" myth being promoted? How has that lie shaped your approach to relationships?
2. Why is "endurance" such an unpopular concept for relationships today? When have you seen perseverance through difficulty make a relationship stronger?
3. During a conflict, what's your default internal reaction? How quickly do you find yourself blaming the person involved instead of focusing on the situation?
4. How does the idea that conflict is *essential* for growth change your perspective? What does it look like to engage with conflict constructively instead of just avoiding it?

Introduction:

A lie has been spread all across the world, that it really doesn't matter if you're married or not. This mindset has infiltrated the Church.

Fighting lies with truth

Lie #3:

Marriage is merely a man-made set of rules and restrictions. I can tailor my marriage however I want to fit my needs.

The truth:

Marriage is an institution created by God. He designed it with specific guidelines and roles to provide SPIRITUAL, EMOTIONAL, and PHYSICAL intimacy as a family's foundation.

Key verse:

²⁴ For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2:24-25

Lie #4 (for men):

Until my wife shows me the respect and physical affection that I need, she shouldn't expect me to step up and lead my family God's way.

The truth:

It is tempting to wait for my wife to do her part before I do mine. But the only person I can change is **ME**. Transformation will occur when I **FOCUS** on being the **HUSBAND** God wants me to be.

Key verse:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her.

Ephesians 5:25

Lie #5 (for women):

Until my husband takes the initiative in the financial, emotional, and spiritual aspects of our relationship, he shouldn't expect me to show him the respect and affection God calls me to as a wife.

The truth:

It is tempting to wait for my husband to do his part before I do mine. But the only person I can change is **ME**. Transformation will occur when I **FOCUS** on being the **WIFE** God wants me to be.

Key verse:

²² Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³ 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. ²⁴ Now as the Church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Ephesians 5:22-24

Discussion Questions:

1. How has the culture's casual view of cohabitation and marriage affected the attitudes and choices of Christians you know?
2. What is lost when a couple treats marriage as a customizable arrangement instead of a divine covenant with a specific design?
3. Why is it so difficult, yet so powerful, to accept that you can only change yourself in a relationship and not your partner?
4. How does changing your behavior as an act of worship to God, rather than to get a specific reaction from your spouse, make your efforts more sustainable?
5. Which is more challenging for you: communicating frustrations without blame, or identifying your own faults? What's one step you could take to improve in that area?

Fighting lies with truth

Lie #6:

Marriage is a 50-50 proposition. As long as everyone does their part everything will be okay.

The truth:

Marriage is a 100%-100% proposition. It is an UNCONDITIONAL commitment to an imperfect person. It's giving the other person what they need the MOST, when they DESERVE it the least, at great PERSONAL COST.

Key verse:

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another."

John 13:34-35

Lie #7:

Marriage shouldn't be this difficult. No matter how hard I work it seems like we always have issues to work through. I really wonder if it's worth it.

The truth:

Everything of great value requires COMMITMENT, SACRIFICE, and PERSEVERANCE. As my spouse and I face challenges and overcome them, our intimacy and joy will far outweigh our present problems.

Key verse:

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Galatians 6:9

Lie #8:

I've tried hard to make this marriage work, but it's too far gone. God wants me to be happy and I know He'll understand if I get a divorce.

The truth:

God **HATES** divorce. No marriage is beyond repair. If Jesus can raise the dead, He can certainly **RESURRECT** my marriage.

Key verse:

"The man who hates and divorces his wife," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "does violence to the one he should protect," says the LORD Almighty. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful.

Malachi 2:16

Discussion Questions:

1. How does shifting your mindset from a 50/50 contract to a 100%-100% covenant change the way you approach conflict and sacrifice in marriage?
2. Why do we often expect our most important relationship to be easy when we accept that careers and other goals require tremendous effort and perseverance?
3. Chip describes suffering as a "gift" that builds intimacy. How can you practically reframe your mindset to see struggles as opportunities for growth rather than just problems to be avoided?
4. When feeling weary in your marriage, what are some specific ways you can fight the urge to give up, as encouraged by Galatians 6:9?
5. How does the belief that "no marriage is beyond repair" challenge the cultural idea that personal happiness is the most important goal in a relationship?

Introduction:

Every marriage will eventually face struggles and arguments over four key areas:

1. Roles
2. In-laws
3. Money
4. Sex

Fighting lies with truth

Lie #9:

Getting help for our marriage from a counselor or a mentor is for losers. We should be able to figure this out on our own, and besides, we don't want to broadcast our problems.

The truth:

Every great athlete, artist, and business executive knows the value of a **COACH**. We all get stuck on occasion and need help to work through the issues we can't see for ourselves.

Key verse:

In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

1 Peter 5:5

Lie #10 (for women):

All he cares about is work and sports. I feel like I'm left to do all the work of raising our kids and taking care of our home. I wonder sometimes if he even cares.

The truth:

Men default to areas where they feel confident. Your husband has fears and insecurities about being a **SPIRITUAL LEADER** and **EFFECTIVE FATHER**. Criticism and disrespect will heighten those fears and push him away.

Key verse:

¹ Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, ² when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

1 Peter 3:1-2

Lie #11 (for men):

All my wife cares about is the kids and the calendar. Our sex life is on life support because she's always tired or making excuses. Sometimes I wonder if she even cares.

The truth:

Women default to areas where they feel confident. Your wife has fears and insecurities about her **VALUE**, **IDENTITY**, and physical **ATTRACTIVENESS**. Sarcasm about sex, her looks, or her preoccupation with the kids will only reinforce her feelings of inadequacy.

Key verse:

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.

Ephesians 5:28-29

Discussion Questions:

1. What keeps couples from seeking help when they get stuck?
2. Chip explains that unresolved issues can shift from being about a topic (like money) to being about the person. How have you seen this happen, and what's the danger in assigning negative motives to your spouse?
3. Thinking about Lie #10, how can a wife create a safe environment for her husband to be vulnerable instead of retreating to his comfort zones like work or sports?
4. Reflecting on Lie #11, how can a husband actively affirm his wife's value, identity, and attractiveness to counteract the insecurities that might cause her to withdraw?
5. What's one practical step you could take today to be the "coach" for another couple or to humble yourself and find a "coach" for your own marriage?

Introduction:

"Relationships just don't work well when the man neglects to take the lead when he should, neglects to make decisions at home, and fails to be proactive in his involvement with his family."

- *"Passive Men, Wild Women"* by Pierre Mornell

Fighting lies with truth

Lie #12 (for men):

Husbands are to earn the money and wives are to take care of the kids and the house.

The truth:

As a husband, I am the **SERVANT LEADER** in our home. I am responsible to provide for and protect my family's physical, spiritual, and emotional needs, as I **MODEL** Jesus every day.

Key verse:

¹ Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 5:1-2

Lie #13 (for women):

My husband is almost like another child I have to take care of. If I didn't handle our finances, the house, our children, and major decisions, this place would fall apart tomorrow.

The truth:

When I take care of everything myself, I'm actually usurping my husband's **GOD-GIVEN** role. Until I **STOP** taking care of everything, my husband will never step up and lead.

Key verse:

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

⁶ in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Breaking the cycle

Women: Refuse to do things that are your spouse's job

Men: Step up and own the responsibility

Discussion Questions:

1. How can a husband be a "servant leader" without becoming passive, and what's the difference between serving your wife and surrendering responsibility to her?
2. For husbands: Beyond providing financially, what's one specific, practical way you can take more ownership of your family's spiritual or emotional well-being this week?
3. For wives: What makes it so difficult to "trust in the Lord" by not stepping in to fix a problem, and what's one area where you could create space for your husband to lead?
4. How does a wife "enabling" a husband's passivity harm both him and the intimacy in their relationship?
5. Instead of complaining or criticizing, how can asking for help and expressing your need for your spouse – break the cycle of passivity and resentment?

Introduction:

Have you ever wondered why a little comment can cause such a big argument with your spouse?

Fighting lies with truth

Lie #14 (for women):

My husband's attitude makes no sense to me. He gets so upset when I make even the smallest comment in front of others about something he did wrong.

The truth:

Husbands fear **FUTILITY**, the sense that they don't measure up. That's why my **AFFIRMATION**, refusing to **CRITICIZE** publicly, and **PHYSICAL** intimacy build up his confidence.

Key verse:

³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:3-4

Lie #15 (for men):

My wife's attitude makes no sense to me. If I joke about her gaining weight or take notice of other women, she comes unglued.

The truth:

Women fear **ABANDONMENT**, of losing the relationship. That's why saying "I **LOVE** you," being a good **LISTENER**, and showing **AFFECTION** in public build up her sense of belonging.

Key verse:

³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:3-4

Discussion Questions:

1. What small, comment or joke have you noticed causes a major negative reaction from your spouse?
2. Wives – after learning that a man's biggest fear is not measuring up, what's one practical way you can build up your husband's confidence, especially when he's struggling or has failed?
3. Husbands – after learning that a woman's biggest fear is abandonment, what's one specific way you can ensure your wife feels secure and belongs, beyond simply saying "I love you"?
4. How can you distinguish between helpful feedback and a comment that triggers your spouse's core fear?

Introduction:

God's original design:

Marriage was created as a sacred stewardship to reflect the unity and love of the Trinity.

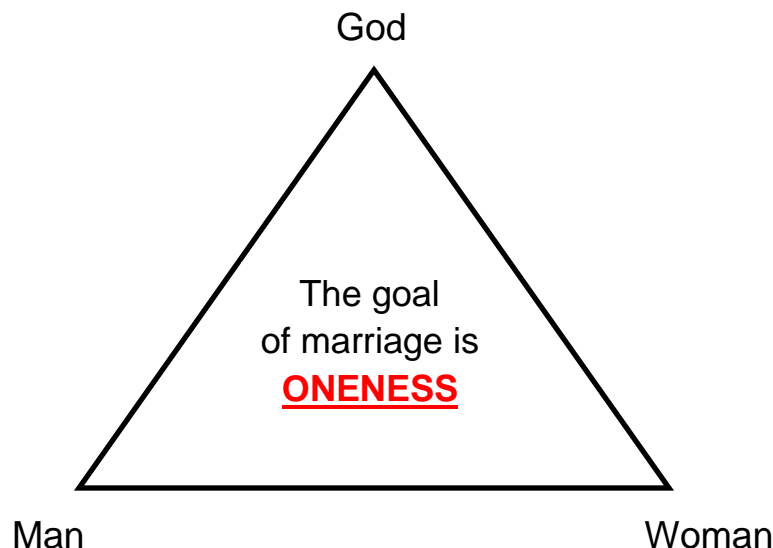
Satan's agenda:

To destroy or pervert marriage by telling lies that make it self-centered

Foundational Marriage Truths

Foundational truth #1:

In my own strength, I am **INCAPABLE** of being the husband of wife God calls me to be. Therefore, my first priority for a successful marriage is my own vibrant **DAILY** walk with God. By His Word and His Spirit in community with fellow believers God will give me **ALL** I need to become a loving and godly husband or wife.



Key verses:

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

2 Peter 1:3-4

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

The BIO Acronym:

- B – Before God Daily
- I – In community
- O – On mission

Foundational truth #2:

I will **CHOOSE** to love my mate by God's power and grace in all circumstances. Love is giving another person what they **NEED** the most, when they **DESERVE** it the least, at great **PERSONAL COST**.

Key verse:

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

Discussion Questions:

1. How have you seen the lies that marriage is about "our needs, our happiness, our fulfillment" play out in our culture or even in your own thinking?
2. Chip uses a triangle to illustrate how drawing near to God brings spouses closer together. Brainstorm some practical ways that you can deepen your relationship with God, which in turn will strengthen your marriage.
3. Of the three practices in the BIO acronym (Before God Daily, In Community, On Mission), which one presents the biggest challenge for you right now, and what is one small step you could take to grow in that area?
4. Chip defines love as "giving another person what they need the most, when they deserve it the least, at great personal cost." When is it most difficult for you to live out this idea?
5. How does viewing your marriage not just as a private relationship but as a public testimony to your children and others – change how you work through challenges?

Introduction:

Marriage is an **UNCONDITIONAL** commitment to an **IMPERFECT** person.

Review:

Foundational Truth #1:

You can't live this life without the supernatural power of God, so following Jesus personally is the number one priority.

Foundational Truth #2:

You must choose to love your mate whether you feel like it or not.

Foundational Marriage Truths

Foundational Truth #3:

We will have ongoing challenges with communication, sex, finances, parenting, and extended family. These issues are not “**DEAL BREAKERS**,” they are “**HEART MAKERS**” as we learn to listen, understand, and follow God's path.

Key verse:

² Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. ⁵ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

James 1:2-5

Foundational Truth #6:

I will not consider a divorce as an **OPTION** and I will never threaten my spouse with divorce. I have made a holy and binding **COVENANT** before God to let nothing undermine our **LIFELONG** commitment.

Key verse:

⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” ⁷ “Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?” ⁸ Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹ I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

Matthew 19:6-9

Discussion Questions:

1. How can you reframe a recurring challenge in your marriage from a "deal breaker" into a "heart maker"?
2. When your spouse's imperfections are most difficult to deal with, what helps you maintain an "unconditional commitment"?
3. What does it look like to "consider it all joy" when facing a significant trial in your marriage, even when you don't feel joyful?
4. How does taking divorce completely off the table as an option change the way you approach conflict and hardship?
5. What might prevent you from humbly asking God or others for wisdom when facing a difficult marital issue?

Foundational Marriage Truths

Foundational truth #4 (for men):

I will choose to **LOVE** my wife today in a **SPECIFIC** and **SACRIFICIAL** way that is meaningful to her. She is God's gift to me and I will **CHERISH** her just as Christ loves His bride, the Church.

Key verse:

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.

Ephesians 5:28-29

Foundational truth #5 (for women):

I will choose to **ENCOURAGE** and **RESPECT** my husband today in a specific and sacrificial way that is meaningful to him. He is God's gift to me and I will **BUILD HIM UP** with my words and actions for the glory of Christ.

Key verse:

¹⁰ A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. ¹¹ Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. ¹² She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.

Proverbs 31:10-12

Discussion Questions:

1. What prevents you from consistently loving your spouse in the specific ways that are most meaningful to them?
2. **For the men:** Beyond saying "I love you," what specific actions make your wife feel truly cherished?
3. **For the women:** What specific words or actions best communicate respect and encouragement to your husband?
4. How does intentionally viewing your spouse as a "gift from God," change your daily attitude and actions toward them?
5. How does viewing your marriage as a testimony to the hope found in Jesus – change your motivation to love your spouse unselfishly?

Introduction:

The foundation of a great family begins with a deep, intimate marriage.

Three skills for a great marriage:

- Skill #1: **FORGIVING**
- Skill #2: **COMMUNICATION**
- Skill #3: **RESOLVING CONFLICT**

Forgiveness – What it's not and what it is:

- Forgiveness is NOT a quick fix or an excuse to be a “doormat” by repeatedly accepting hurtful behavior without addressing the root issues
- Forgiveness IS a spiritual discipline that involves three distinct parts:
 1. It's a **DECISION**
 2. It's a **PROCESS**
 3. It actually is **ACCOMPLISHED**

The parable of the unforgiving servant:

*²¹ Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" ²² Jesus *said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.*

²³ "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. ²⁵ But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. ²⁶ So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.'

*²⁷ And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' ²⁹ So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' ³⁰ But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. ³¹ So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. ³² Then summoning him, his lord *said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. ³⁵ My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."*

Matthew 18:21-35

Three-part method for forgiveness:

1. **Act:** Choose to forgive.
2. **Process:** Actively pray and bless the person with your words and actions.
3. **Accomplished:** The true test of forgiveness is when you can genuinely rejoice in the other person's success and well-being.

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways do you find yourself wanting mercy from God but demanding justice from your spouse?
2. What is one specific hurt you need to make a conscious decision to forgive? What tangible step will you take this week to solidify that choice?
3. How does shifting your prayers from "God, change them" to "God, bless them" impact your own heart during a conflict?
4. Identify one specific, practical way you will actively "bless" your spouse this week through your words or actions. (*especially if you don't feel like it*)
5. The next time you're tempted to use a superficial fix to smooth over a conflict, what is a different action you can take to begin the actual work of forgiveness?

Introduction: It all started with “the car.”

The issue: Communication or Chaos

Understanding the communication process:

- Definition: The meeting of **MEANINGS**.

“Communication is the privilege of exchanging vulnerabilities.”

Norman Wright

“Communication is the process of sharing yourself verbally and nonverbally in such a way that the other person can both accept and understand what you are saying.”

Norman Wright

- The complete message

Words alone = 7% of meaning

Tone of voice = 38% of meaning

Facial expression

Gestures - posture = 55% of meaning

Total non-verbal

- Five levels of communication

Level	Type	Description
Level 1	Cliché Conversations	Safe, shallow, polite
Level 2	Reporting Facts	Refers basically to third person
Level 3	Idea's or Judgments	Risk begins here (attachment of self with facts)
Level 4	Feelings and Emotions	Laying self on the line
Level 5	Open Communication	Total honesty, "mutual understanding," vulnerability

(Taken from *Why Am I Afraid To Tell You Who I Am?* by John Powell)

5 Principles that will transform communication in your home:

1. **BE HONEST** - Speak the truth in love.

¹⁵...but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all {aspects} into Him, who is the head, {even} Christ, ²⁵Finish, then, with lying, and tell your neighbor the truth. For we are not separate units but intimately related to one another in Christ.

Ephesians 4:15, 25

2. **BE ANGRY**- Deal with anger appropriately.

²⁶If you are angry, be sure that it is not out of wounded pride or bad temper ²⁷Never go to bed angry - don't give the devil that sort of foothold.

Ephesians 4:26-27

3. **BE DILIGENT** - Work hard on your relationship.

²⁸If you used to be a thief you must not only give up stealing, but you must learn to make an honest living, so that you may be able to give to those in need.

Ephesians 4:28

4. **BE POSITIVE** - Don't wound with your words.

²⁹Let there be no more foul language, but good words instead - words suitable for the occasion, which God can use to help other people.³⁰Never hurt the Holy Spirit. He is, remember, the personal pledge of your eventual full redemption.³¹Let there be no more resentment, no more slander and no more malicious remarks.

Ephesians 4:29-31

5. **BE FORGIVING** - Be the first to say, "I'm sorry."

³²Be kind to one another; be understanding. Be as ready to forgive others as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:32

Practical skills and suggestions to enhance communication in your home:• **The conference** - A tool for listening

Ask Three Questions: 1 - What are you concerned about?

2 - What do you desire?

3 - What are you willing to do?

• **Word pictures** - A tool for understanding• **"Care" lists** - A tool for building

List seven simple, loving, "caring behaviors" that are non-conflict producing and not expensive that make you feel loved by your spouse.

Men

1. Communicates confidence in me
2. Shows affection
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Women

1. He calls from work
2. Listens intently to me
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Exchange lists with your spouse and determine to do at least two on his/her list daily for one week.

Discussion Questions:

1. What did you learn about communication that was new or helpful to you?
2. Which of the **Five Biblical Principles** concerning communication from Ephesians 4 do you do well?
3. For which of the **Five Biblical Principles** do you need to ask God for grace and help to communicate in a way that would honor Him?
4. Which of the **skills** shared do you think would help your relationship the most? The Conference, Word Pictures, or the "Care" List
5. What specific step of faith are you going to take to improve the communication in your marriage?

Introduction: What I learned on the sandlot from the “Barnes Boys”

Conflict is normal

Conflict is an opportunity for growth

Conflict must be diffused or it will destroy

Healthy conflict demands rules so no one gets hurt

God’s perspective on conflict:

- **Conflict is inevitable in a fallen world**

"I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

John 16:33

- **Conflict flows from our differences and our selfishness**

- Differences in **belief** produce conflict.

Acts 15:1-35

- Differences in **perspective** produce conflict.

Acts 15:36-41

- Differences in **style** produce conflict.

Philippians 4:2-3

- Selfish **desires** produce conflict.

James 4:1-3

¹What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ²You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

James 4:1-3

- **Conflict is an opportunity for growth**

Philippians 2:1-4

- In Christ, differences complement vs. compete.

Philippians 2:1-2

- In Christ, selfishness is transformed to servant-hood.

Philippians 2:3-4

- In Christ, we can “fight fair” and safely.

Ephesians 4:25-32

(See Part 3 of this series: *How To ‘Share Hearts’ Instead Of ‘Exchange Words’*)



The most common communication styles:

1. Turtles: The goal is to avoid.

- Can clam up and **NOT SPEAK**.
- Can **WITHDRAW** affection.
- Can give the **COLD SHOULDER**.
- Can **AVOID** and **REDIRECT**.
- Can **RUN** to diversionary interests (alcohol, spending, pleasure).
- The natural inclination is to withdraw.

2. Sharks: The goal is to win.

- Can try to be **MIND READERS**.
- Can **SPIN** and turn the problem back to you
- Can keep **SCORE**.
- Can use logic to **ESCAPE** emotional reality.
- Can use **THREATS** and **FEAR** to shut down any further conversation.
- Can **HUMILIATE** using words like “stupid” and “ludicrous.”
- The natural inclination is to attack.

How to *diffuse* conflict in your marriage:

D - DEFINE the problem (on your own). Proverbs 15:14

I - INITIATE a time to talk. Matthew 5:23-24

F - FOCUS on the “perceived” problem, not the person. Proverbs 18:19

F - FEEL their pain (as though it were your own). Proverbs 17:17

U - UNCOVER the root problem. Proverbs 20:5

<u>Symptom</u>	<u>Root</u>
Money	Values, Priorities, Power / Control Issues
Sex	Communication, Unmet Emotional Needs, Past History / Baggage
In-Laws	Loyalty, Expectations
Children / Work	Roles and/or Goals

S - SET things right between you.

James 5:16

1. **Own your responsibility.**
2. **Confess - “I was wrong. . .”**
3. **Ask forgiveness - “Will you forgive me?”**

E - ESTABLISH a specific action plan that addresses the issue discussed
(Write it down)

James 1:22-25

- **Husband - I commit to . . . by . . . (when?)**
- **Wife - I commit to . . . by . . . (when?)**

Discussion Questions:

1. How did your family handle conflict growing up?
2. When conflict arises, do you tend to become more a “turtle” or a “shark?”
3. What specifically did you learn about resolving conflict that was most helpful?
4. Is there a specific issue in your marriage that needs to be diffused? Are you willing to put into practice the “Diffuse Conflict” game-plan you learned today? When and how will you go about it?

Introduction: These are difficult days in which to raise children

Children are a gift from the Lord...

Psalm 127:3

- Your child's world is . . .
- A parent's challenge is . . .
- The question we're all asking is . . .

Four principles for positive parenting

1. Effective parenting begins with positive

CLEAR - CUT OBJECTIVES!

Fathers, don't over-correct your children or make it difficult for them to obey the commandment. Bring them up with Christian teaching in Christian discipline.

Ephesians 6:4 (Phillips)

- The principle of focus
- God's Dream vs. The human dream for your child

2. Effective parenting demands we **PRACTICE** what we **PREACH**.

¹⁴I am not writing this to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. ¹⁵Even though you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. ¹⁶Therefore I urge you to imitate me.

1 Corinthians 4:14-16

- The principle of modeling
- “More is caught than taught”

3. Effective parents build relationships that **BOND**.

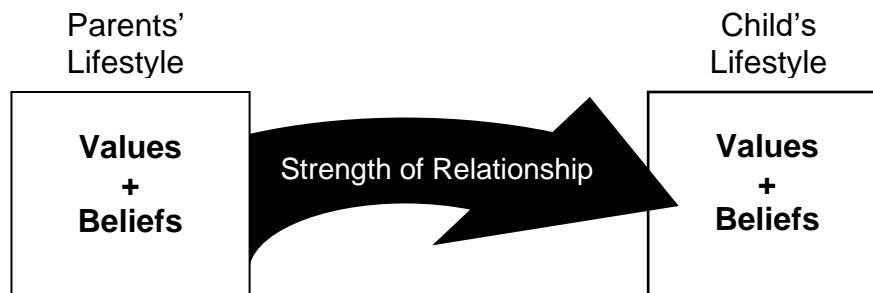
⁷ Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, ⁸ so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

¹¹For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, ¹²encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His Kingdom and glory.

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12

- The principle of relationship



8 “Keys” that build relationships that bond

1. **UNCONDITIONAL** love
2. Scheduled **TIME**
3. **FOCUSED** attention
4. **EYE** contact
5. **ONGOING** communication
6. Meaningful **TOUCH**
7. Have **FUN** together
8. **PRAY** together often

4. Effective parenting requires **CONSTANT REPAIR** and **ONGOING MAINTENANCE**.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

- The principle of process
- 5 magic words = **I'M SORRY!** and **PLEASE FORGIVE ME!**
- It's never too late!

Discussion Questions:

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how positive of a parent are you?
2. Discuss which point was most helpful to you. Why?
3. Where do you need to focus some parenting energy? What specifically will the next step look like?

Introduction: God's Dream for Your Child

1. You must understand your child's two primary needs are for

SIGNIFICANCE and SECURITY.

- Two questions kids are always asking:

1. Do you LOVE me?

2. Where are the BOUNDARIES?

- The Perfect Parent

Genesis 1:27-29; 2:15-17

2. You must recognize your child's primary responsibility is to learn

OBEDIENCE.

¹Children, it is your Christian duty to obey your parents, for this is the right thing to do. ²"Respect your father and mother" is the first commandment that has a promise added: ³"so that all may go well with you, and you may live a long time in the land."

Ephesians 6:1-3

- Defining obedience: Obedience is teaching your child to come UNDER the hearing of your voice.

Whoever has My commands and keeps them, is the one who loves Me. The one who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love them and show Myself to them.

John 14:21

3. You must remember, obedience is a **DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS**.

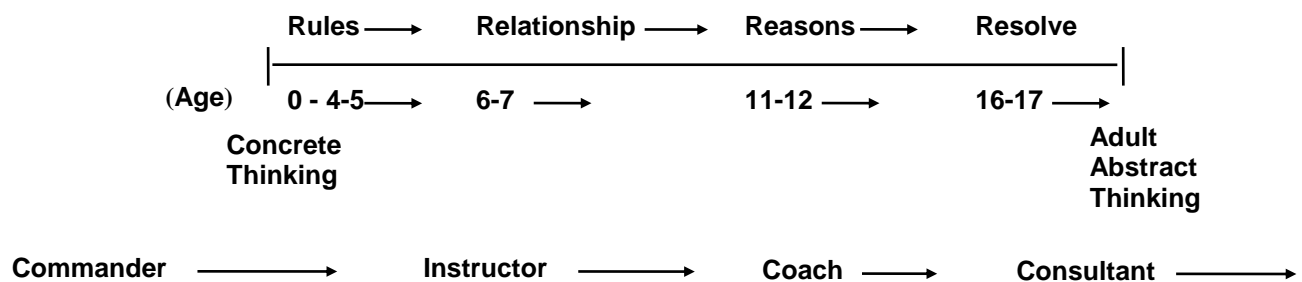
Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.

Hebrews 5:8

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

Luke 2:52

- Spiritual formation and mental development - *Chart by Lawrence Kohlberg



- Knowledge axiom: Knowledge + Love + Wisdom = Convictions.
1. Principle of **READINESS** - Only teach children what they are mentally and emotionally capable of learning.
 2. Principle of **RESPONSIBILITY** - Never habitually do for your children what they can do for themselves.

Parents, do not treat your children in such a way as to make them angry. Instead, raise them with Christian discipline and instruction.

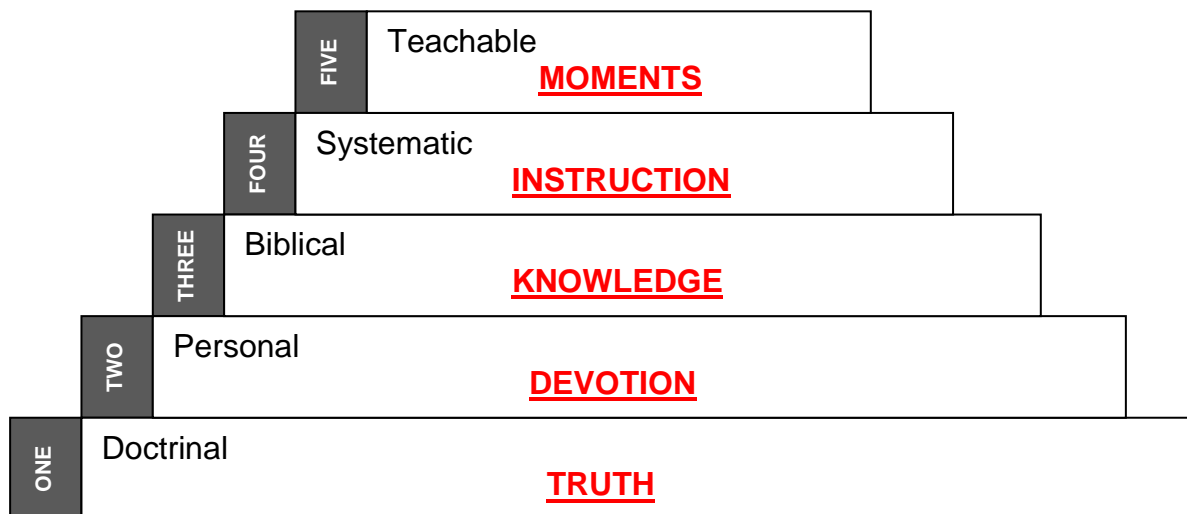
Ephesians 6:4

4. You must commit to providing the necessary **RESOURCES** for your child to learn obedience.

⁴Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

- Five resources your children need from you



- A word picture = "The Journey of Life"

5. Obedience is achieved when your child has **TRANSFERRED** his/her primary love, submission, and dependency from **YOU** to **JESUS CHRIST**.

- Three characteristics of righteous children

1. They make wise **DECISIONS**.

Philippians 1:9-11

2. They keep their **COMMITMENTS**.

Proverbs 20:6

3. They care genuinely for **OTHERS**.

John 15:13

Discussion Questions:

1. What are your child's greatest needs?
2. What is your child's greatest responsibility? Discuss what that means and what that involves.
3. What is your role as a parent in helping your child learn obedience? Where is that going well? Where do you need help?
4. What was specifically helpful to you from this message? What step could you take to help your child reach his/her full potential?

Introduction: “Five Smooth Stones”

God has been in the business of helping children defeat the “evil giants” in their world for a long time.

1. Teach them to suffer well

- A theology of suffering
 - Life is hard, but God is good!
 - Life is unjust, but God is sovereign.
 - Old Testament roots – Joseph Genesis 37-50
 - New Testament command 1 Peter 2:21-23
- Application: Help your child **GROW** through suffering.
- Life message: Suffering is **NORMAL**.

2. Teach them to work “Unto the Lord”

- A theology of work
 - Work is a “calling,” not a job.
 - All work is sacred.
 - Our work is to flow from God’s unique design and purpose for our lives.
 - Work is for one audience; the “audience of one.”
 - Old Testament roots Genesis 2:15
 - New Testament command Colossians 3:23
- Application: Help your child **DISCOVER** “God’s calling” for their life so they can impact their world and beyond.
- Life message: You were **CREATED** to work!

3. Teach them to manage their lives wisely

- A theology of stewardship
 - God owns everything.
 - God has entrusted to us “things” to manage for Him. (time, talent, treasure)
 - God expects a positive return on His investment.
 - God will hold you accountable.
 - God wants you to share in His joy.
 - Old Testament roots Genesis 1:26-28
 - New Testament command Matthew 25:14-30
- Application: Help your child to become **FAITHFUL** in the “little things.” Luke 16:10
- Life message: Your life is a **SACRED** stewardship!

4. Teach them to discern good from evil

- A theology of holiness
 - God is high, holy, “totally other.”
 - God is absolute truth.
 - God’s Word defines absolute truth.
 - God’s Law (morals) is for our protection.
 - God’s ultimate aim is to make us holy.
 - Old Testament roots Exodus 3:5-6
 - New Testament command 1 Peter 1:15-16
- Application: Help your child think **BIBLICALLY** and critically to develop personal **CONVICTIONS** and character.
- Life message: **OBEDIENCE** is the only way to get God’s best.

5. Teach them to live grace-filled lives

- A theology of grace

- Grace is the unmerited and unconditional love of God toward us.
- Grace is free to us, but costly to God.
- The cross is God's greatest act of grace.
- Salvation is a free gift from God.
- Grace must be received - i.e. faith.
- Grace produces *gratitude* toward God, and love toward others.
- Old Testament roots
- New Testament command

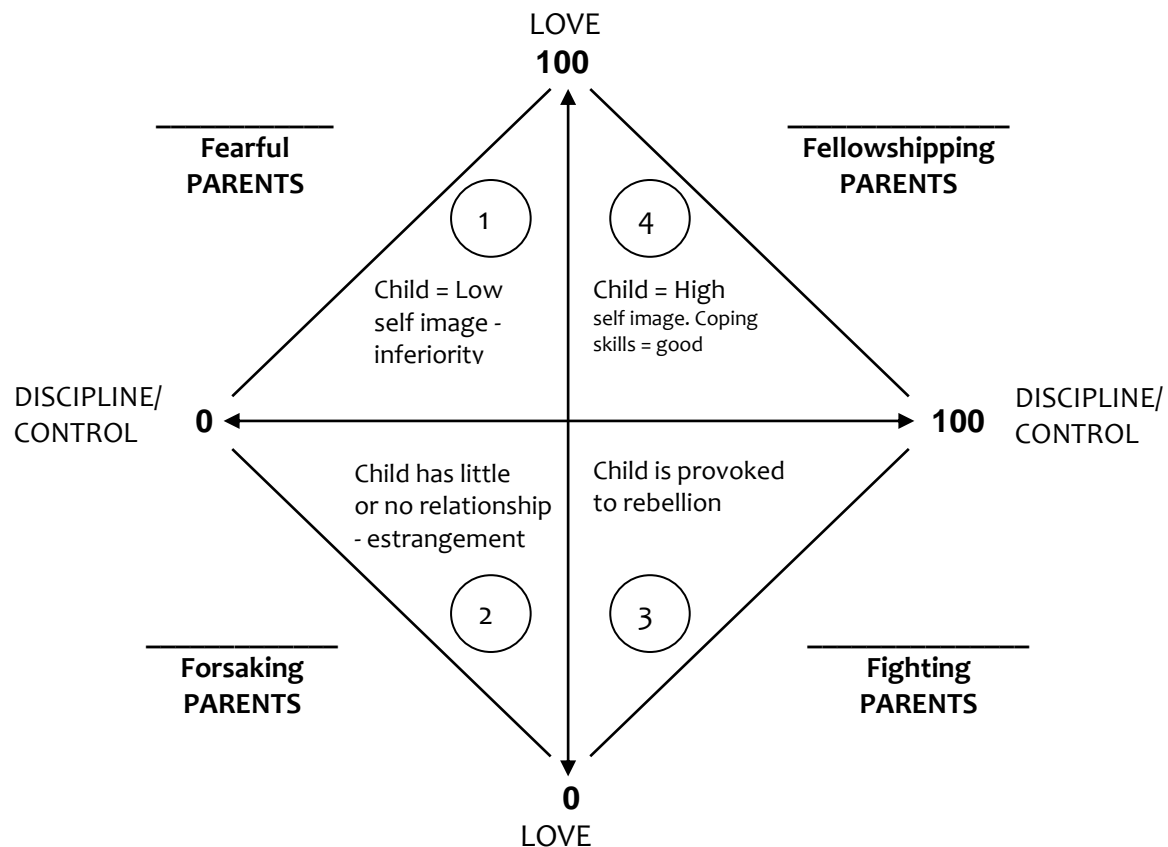
Genesis 3:21

Ephesians 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:13

- Application: Help your child realize that **FAILURE** is never final with God.
- Life message: You were created to **RECEIVE** grace and to give grace.

Discussion Questions:

1. Which part of this message was most helpful? Most challenging? Most thought-provoking?
2. Why is it so important to teach our children to think biblically? To develop a Christian world-view?
3. What specific step would allow you to put one of these "smooth stones" in the sling of your child's life?

Case Study #1 – Reuben Hill (Minnesota Report)**Summary:**

The balanced authoritative parent, who gives high support (love) and high control (discipline), typically produces children with high self-esteem, good coping skills, and a positive relationship with parents.

Case Study #2 – Hebrews 12 - Christians A.D. 66-70

⁴ In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

⁵ And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,

⁶ because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”

⁷ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?

⁸ If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.

⁹ Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live!

¹⁰ They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.

¹¹ No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Hebrews 12:4-11

Summary:

Discipline is teaching **obedience** to God and His Word through **consistent consequences** (actions) and **clear instructions** (words) in an atmosphere of **love**.

Five characteristics of discipline:

1. The **necessity** of discipline = To deter **DESTRUCTION**. Hebrews 12:4
2. The **means** of discipline = The **ACTIONS** and **WORDS**. Hebrews 12:5
3. The **motive** in discipline = To express **LOVE**. Hebrews 12:6-9
4. The **goal** of discipline = To teach **OBEDIENCE or SUBMISSION**. Hebrews 12:9
5. The **result** of discipline = Short term **PAIN** and long term **GAIN**. Hebrews 12:10,11

Knowing the difference between punishment and discipline:

	Punishment	Discipline
Purpose	To inflict penalty for an offense	To train for correction and maturity
Focus	Past misdeeds	Future correct acts
Attitude	Hostility and frustration on the part of the parent	Love and concern on the part of the parent
Resulting emotion in the child	Fear and guilt	Security

Two key biblical concepts**1. Actions:** Consistent consequences

He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently.

Proverbs 13:24

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far away.

Proverbs 22:15

Seven steps to discipline:

- 1) Clear **WARNING**.
- 2) Establish responsibility.
- 3) Avoid **EMBARASSMENT**.
- 4) Communicate grief.
- 5) Flick the **WRIST**.
- 6) Sincere repentance.
- 7) Unconditional **LOVE**.

2. Words: Clear instructions

¹¹My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline, and do not resent His rebuke,

¹² because the LORD disciplines those He loves, as a father the son he delights in.

Proverbs 3:11-12

Four ways to use words to bring about correction:

- 1) Say "no" **FIRMLY**.
- 2) **CLEAR WARNING** of consequences.
- 3) Use **CONTRACTS**.
- 4) Use **CONSEQUENCES**

More practical tips for balanced parenting:**Avoid the pitfalls of:**

- The screaming parent
- The all talk parent
- The abusive parent
- The "close-lipped" parent
- The light bulb parent

Develop a game plan:

- Identify the top 2 behavior problems.
- Honestly evaluate your parenting pattern.
- Have a family conference.
- Set goals together

Discussion Questions:

1. How would you classify your parenting style or tendency compared to the case study? Discuss your answer.
2. What is the difference between discipline and punishment?
3. What are your top two disciplinary problems with your children? What means of action/consequences or instruction would help your child learn obedience?
4. What specific step do you need to take to align your parenting with God's pattern to bring out the best in your child?

6 Principles to Parenting Your Adult Kids

Principle #1: Your **ROLE** as a parent has to change.

- We have to move to an **ADULT-TO-ADULT** relationship.
- Be **ENCOURAGING**, not intrusive.

³ Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from Him. ⁴ Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. ⁵ Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.

Psalm 127:3-5a

- Our kids are like **ARROWS** launched toward a target.
- The real goal isn't that everything is the way you like it, but that they actually **FULFILL** the purpose God has for them.
- Am I helping or am I **ENABLING** dependency?
- **EXPERIENCE** is a better teacher than advice.
- When we let them go, there is a sense of **LOSS**.
- As the role changes, we have to get as physically, emotionally, and spiritually **HEALTHY** together.

Principle #2: Unsolicited advice is usually taken as CRITICISM.

- Keep your mouth SHUT and the welcome mat out.
- Them pulling AWAY is a part of them growing up.
- We have to ASK for permission.
- The way to build a bridge is LISTENING and asking questions.

⁸ Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you; rebuke the wise and they will love you.

⁹ Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning. ¹⁰ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Proverbs 9:8-10

Principle #3: Become a STUDENT of their culture.

- Distinctive #1: They are shaped by TECHNOLOGY.
- Distinctive #2: They don't live to WORK, they work to live.
- Distinctive #3: They want to have a good MARRIAGE and they want to be good parents.
- Distinctive #4: They consider TOLERANCE as a form of loving.

²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.

1 Corinthians 9:20-22

Principle #4: When your grown children **VIOLATE** your values, you can't want it more than they want it.

- You've got to give them **TOUGH LOVE**.
- You can't **BAIL** them out.

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Proverbs 14:12

- Love is giving another person what they **NEED** the most, when they **DESERVE** it the least, at great personal cost.
- We need **SUPPORT**, counsel, and wisdom.
- We have to **RELINQUISH** our children to God.

The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.

Proverbs 21:1

Principle #5: They will never know how far the town is if you CARRY them on your back.

- There's pain in life. It's either the pain of discipline or the pain of REGRET.

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Hebrews 12:11

- Set EXPECTATIONS and BOUNDARIES.
- People support what they help CREATE.

Principle #6: Financial independence and responsibility is the GOAL.

- Develop a clear plan and an exit STRATEGY.
- Part of our godliness is how we HANDLE our money.

"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much."

Luke 16:10

- Teach them to be good STEWARDS of money.

Application Questions:

1. What is the most challenging thing about moving from an adult-child to adult-adult relationship for you?
2. Which of your attitudes and behaviors are unintentionally causing obstacles to your adult child becoming independent?
3. How does the idea of “asking for permission” to give advice make you feel? What step can you take to apply the concept the next time you want to give advice?
4. Do you try to understand your adult child’s point of view, or do you try to convince them of yours?
5. How would you describe the tone of your relationship with your kids? Is it full of A.W.E.? (Affection, warmth, and encouragement?)
6. How do you show love and grace to your adult children who aren’t living according to your values?
7. Some people confuse tough love with meanness. How do you define it? What does tough love look like in your relationship with your adult child?
8. What is something you’re doing for your adult children that they’re capable of doing for themselves?
9. Jim talks about the value of setting clear expectations and boundaries. If your adult children are living at home, how are you doing with that?
10. What discussions do you need to have that would strengthen your adult child’s ability to be financially independent?