Parenting for Life

Lessons 1–4 · Biblical Parenting Study Companion

Source note: These are original study-based lessons, not verbatim transcripts or official course materials. The Lesson 4 recording has not been transcribed. Scripture quotations are from the NASB 1995.

Audio: Parenting for Life (2009), Richard Harasick, Grace Community Church: gracechurch.org/sermons/series/372

LESSON 01

The Parent’s Priorities

What comes first in my parenting?



Audio: Session 1 (9/20/2009), gracechurch.org/sermons/4404

Every family runs on priorities, whether we name them or not. This lesson asks what sits at the centre of our home. Scripture calls parents to love God first and to let His Word shape ordinary days, so that our children see a faith that is lived and not only spoken.

Scripture reading

Read: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 6:33; Psalm 127:3; Ephesians 6:4

> *“These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You 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.”* **Deuteronomy 6:6–7 (NASB 1995)**

> *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”* **Matthew 6:33 (NASB 1995)**

The first question is about worship

Every parent has hopes for their children: safety, education, good manners and opportunities. These are good gifts, but they cannot become our highest purpose. Christian parenting begins by recognising that God is Lord over the whole family, not merely over a Sunday activity.

A parent teaches through everyday life

Deuteronomy 6 places the teaching of God’s words in the ordinary rhythm of life: at home, on the road, when resting and when rising. Instruction is not confined to a formal lesson. Children watch how adults handle inconvenience, speak about others, respond to mistakes and seek forgiveness.

Priorities are visible in decisions

A family’s priorities are revealed by time, attention and repeated choices. Work, sport, academic success and comfort can quietly crowd out worship, prayer, relationships and service. The answer is not to abandon ordinary responsibilities but to order them under love for God.

Grace for imperfect parents

Our example will be inconsistent. When we sin, we should acknowledge it rather than defend ourselves. An honest apology and a changed response can model repentance more clearly than pretending we never fail.

My reflection

Deuteronomy 6 does not begin with my children. It begins with me: these words “shall be on your heart.” I cannot pass on a love for God that I am not cultivating myself. That is a sobering place to start.

I’m tempted to measure a good week by how much got done: work delivered, lifts given, homework finished. Those things matter, but when I look honestly at my calendar it does not always say “seek first His kingdom.” Busyness can quietly become the real lord of the house.

I also notice that my children learn more from how I react when plans fall apart than from anything I plan to teach. They are watching whether Christ actually governs my time and my temper.

So my resolution is simple and modest: to bring God’s Word into the ordinary moments we already share, and to be quick to confess when my priorities are out of order. Psalm 127 reminds me that children are a gift of the LORD. I want to receive that gift with gratitude, not treat it as one more task to manage.

Discuss and reflect

- Which achievements am I tempted to value above faithfulness?
- What does my child see when plans are interrupted?
- Where could Scripture become part of an ordinary daily routine?

This week’s practice

Choose one daily moment (a meal, journey or bedtime) for a brief Scripture conversation. Ask for forgiveness where needed, and record what you learned.

Closing prayer

Lord, You are the one God, worthy of all my heart, soul and strength. Put Your words on my heart before I try to teach them. Help me to seek Your kingdom first in the ordinary choices of each day, so that my children see that You come first in our home. Thank You for the gift of my children. Amen.

LESSON 02

The Parent’s Goal

More than outward obedience



Audio: Session 2 (9/27/2009), gracechurch.org/sermons/4842

What are we actually aiming for as parents? Well-behaved children are a good thing, but they are not the goal. This lesson asks us to define success the way Scripture does: glorifying God, teaching the gospel faithfully, and trusting Him with what only He can do in a child’s heart.

Scripture reading

Read: 1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 6:4; Romans 3:23-24; 2 Timothy 3:14-17

> *“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”* **1 Corinthians 10:31 (NASB 1995)**

> *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;”* **Romans 3:23–24 (NASB 1995)**

Define success biblically

The goal of parenting cannot be reduced to producing polite, accomplished or trouble-free children. We are called to glorify God in how we parent, faithfully teaching truth and helping our children recognise their need for Christ.

Behaviour matters, but so does the heart

A child may comply to gain approval, avoid consequences or secure a reward. We should teach right conduct without assuming that external compliance equals inward faith. Ask questions that uncover motives, fears and desires rather than only demanding a quick correction.

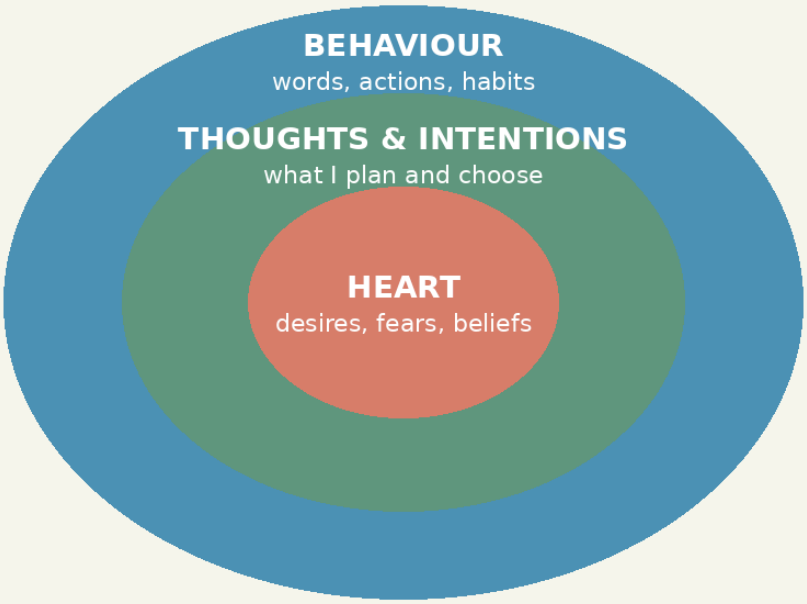
Teach the gospel rather than moralism

The gospel is not simply “try harder and be good”. Parents and children alike are sinners in need of grace. Explain both God’s commands and the mercy available in Jesus Christ. Instruction should point beyond self-improvement to repentance and faith.

Faithfulness is our task; conversion is God’s work

Parents can pray, teach, model, encourage and correct. They cannot manufacture a new heart or guarantee salvation through a technique. This is a reason for humility, hope and perseverance, not passivity.

Behaviour grows from the heart



“Watch over your heart with all diligence” Proverbs 4:23 (NASB 1995)

My reflection

If I am honest, I am tempted to treat a quiet, compliant child as proof that I am doing well. Good behaviour makes my life easier and makes me look good. But Romans 3 tells me that my children, like me, “have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Outward obedience cannot fix that. Only grace in Christ can.

That changes what I am aiming for. My goal is not a polished performance but a heart that knows its need of a Saviour. I believe God saves sinners by His grace alone, so I

cannot produce faith in my children by technique or pressure. That humbles me, and it frees me.

My part is to be faithful: to teach the Scriptures that are “able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation,” to explain both God’s law and His mercy, and to pray. I want to stop settling for “just do what you’re told” and take the time to talk about the heart. And I want to do it all, as Paul says, to the glory of God, not for my own reputation.

Discuss and reflect

- How do I measure parenting success?
- Do I only praise results, or also honesty and wise choices?
- How can I explain the gospel in language my child understands?

This week’s practice

In one correction this week, move from “stop doing that” to a calm conversation about the action, its effect on others, the underlying desire and a better response.

Closing prayer

Father, forgive me for the times I have wanted good behaviour more than I have wanted my children to know You. Help me to do all things to Your glory, to teach Your Word faithfully, and to point my children to the grace that is in Christ Jesus. I cannot change their hearts; I ask You to do what only You can do. Amen.

LESSON 03

The Parent’s Challenges

Examine the motives behind our reactions



Audio: Session 3 (10/4/2009), gracechurch.org/sermons/4843

Some of the hardest moments in parenting reveal more about us than about our children. This lesson turns the mirror on the parent. Scripture helps us see the desires behind our reactions, and calls us to respond with the patience, gentleness and self-control that the Spirit produces.

Scripture reading

Read: James 4:1-3; Proverbs 15:1; Galatians 5:22-23; Colossians 3:12-14

> *“What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?”* **James 4:1 (NASB 1995)**

> *“A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.”* **Proverbs 15:1 (NASB 1995)**

The challenge is not only the child’s behaviour

Parenting exposes our impatience, fear, desire for control and concern about others’ opinions. A child’s behaviour may genuinely require correction while our own response also requires repentance. We must distinguish biblical expectations from preferences.

Three competing motivations

We can respond to protect our convenience (“I want quiet now”), our image (“What will people think?”) or our sense of control (“I must prevent every mistake”). These motives can disguise themselves as concern for a child’s welfare. Ask what you are seeking before you react.

Patience does not mean permissiveness

Firm boundaries and patient love are not opposites. Calm instruction can be clear and consistent. Likewise, correction need not be harsh to be serious. Slow down, explain expectations, follow through fairly and restore the relationship.

Parenting takes long-term perseverance

Children mature over years, not after one conversation. Parents should expect repetition, developmentally appropriate mistakes and the need for consistent teaching. A single difficult day is not the whole story.

My reflection

James asks a question I would rather avoid: where do quarrels come from? His answer is uncomfortable. Often the conflict in our home starts with what I want: quiet, convenience, being respected, or not being embarrassed in front of others.

I’m tempted to call my frustration “discipline” when it is really impatience. I can be quick to correct my children’s attitude while ignoring my own. Proverbs 15:1 is plain: a harsh word stirs up anger. When I raise my voice, I am usually adding fuel, not teaching.

I am also learning that being patient is not the same as giving in. I can hold a clear boundary and still speak gently. That kind of self-control is not something I can manufacture. It is the fruit of the Spirit, and I need to ask for it daily.

So I want to slow down before I react, to ask what I am really after, and to be willing to say “I was wrong” to my children when my motives were selfish.

Discuss and reflect

- Which behaviour triggers my strongest reaction, and why?
- Where do I confuse my preferences with God’s commands?
- What would a calm, truthful and loving response look like?

This week’s practice

Before correcting, ask: What happened? What am I feeling? What am I wanting? What does this child need to learn? Return to the conversation when you can respond safely and calmly.

Closing prayer

Lord, show me the desires behind my reactions. Forgive me for the times I have corrected my children out of selfishness, pride or impatience. Fill me with Your Spirit, so that I answer gently, set boundaries in love and persevere through the hard days. Clothe me with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Amen.

LESSON 04

The Parent’s Roles

Teach, nurture, correct and equip



Audio: Session 4 (10/11/2009), gracechurch.org/sermons/4844

God gives parents real responsibility for their children, and with it real accountability to Him. This lesson looks at what that role involves: teaching before correcting, disciplining with purpose rather than anger, looking beneath the surface to the heart, and preparing children for growing responsibility.

Scripture reading

Read: Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21; Proverbs 4:23; Proverbs 13:24; Proverbs 22:15; Proverbs 23:13-14; Proverbs 29:15; Hebrews 12:10-11; Galatians 6:1

> *“Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.”* **Proverbs 4:23 (NASB 1995)**

> *“He who withholds his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.”* **Proverbs 13:24 (NASB 1995)**

> *“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.”* **Proverbs 22:15 (NASB 1995)**

> *“The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.”* **Proverbs 29:15 (NASB 1995)**

> *“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 (NASB 1995)**

Parents are entrusted with responsibility

Parents are neither passive spectators nor absolute rulers. They have a responsibility to protect, teach, model, correct and prepare children for increasing responsibility. Authority should be exercised as stewardship before God, never as permission for humiliation or harm.

Instruction comes before correction

Children need to know what is expected, why it matters and how to practise it. A clear routine, an age-appropriate explanation and a consistent example reduce confusion. When behaviour falls short, respond to the specific action and teach a constructive alternative.

Discipline is loving, controlled and purposeful

Scripture teaches that a parent who loves a child will discipline him, and that this discipline includes the rod (Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 23:13–14; 29:15). Biblical spanking is never violent, never an outlet for anger, never humiliating and never meant to injure. It is given calmly and privately, only after the child understands what was wrong, and in proportion to the offence. It belongs alongside clear instruction, warnings and other consequences, not in place of them. If you are angry, wait until you are calm. Afterwards, comfort and hold your child, assure them of your love, and point them to the forgiveness God offers in Christ. The goal is the “peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:11), not revenge or the release of adult frustration.

Look below the surface

The heart diagram in the course appendix illustrates that desires, intentions and beliefs influence outward behaviour. We can use this insight to ask open questions. We should not presume we can read a child’s heart; listen and investigate gently.

Responsibility grows with maturity

The parent–child relationship chart highlights a shift from intensive early guidance towards greater instruction, discernment and responsibility. It is a conceptual picture, not a rigid age-based formula. Continue relationship and counsel while allowing suitable independence.

Loving discipline: a biblical pattern



Hebrews 12:11 • Proverbs 13:24 • Ephesians 6:4

My reflection

The authority I have as a father is real, but it is borrowed. God has entrusted my children to me, and I will answer to Him for how I use that trust. Ephesians 6:4 holds both sides together: I must not provoke my children to anger, and I must bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

I believe Scripture when it says that the parent who withholds the rod does not truly love his child. I cannot hand discipline over to a culture that calls all spanking harmful. But I also know my own heart. I'm tempted to correct before I have clearly taught, and to let my irritation set the tone. A spanking given in anger is not biblical discipline at all.

So I want my discipline to be calm, controlled and never harsh, and I want it always to end the same way: with a hug, with reassurance of my love, and with the gospel. Hebrews 12 reminds me that discipline is training for righteousness.

Proverbs 4:23 points me to the heart. My goal is not just to stop the behaviour but to shepherd my child towards Christ.

Discuss and reflect

- Have I clearly taught the behaviour I expect before I correct?
- Am I correcting to help my child grow, or because I am angry?
- When I use the rod, is it calm, private, never harsh, and always followed by comfort, restoration and the gospel?
- Where can I offer a little more age-appropriate responsibility?

This week's practice

Choose one recurring area of disobedience. At a calm time, teach the expectation and explain clearly what will follow if your child chooses to disobey, whether a loss of privilege or a calm, controlled spanking. When it happens, follow through consistently and without anger. Afterwards, hold your child, reassure them of your love, talk about forgiveness in Christ and pray together. Recognise progress when you see it.

Closing prayer

Father, thank You for disciplining Your children for our good. Help me to carry the responsibility You have given me with humility and faithfulness: to teach patiently, to discipline with self-control and never in anger, to look to the heart, to restore quickly and to point my children to Christ. Where I have exasperated them, forgive me and help me to make it right. Amen.

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