

## Parenting Grade School Children From Discipline to Discipleship

### A. Hope-Filled Promises

1. *“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”* (Proverbs 22:6)
2. *“Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.*

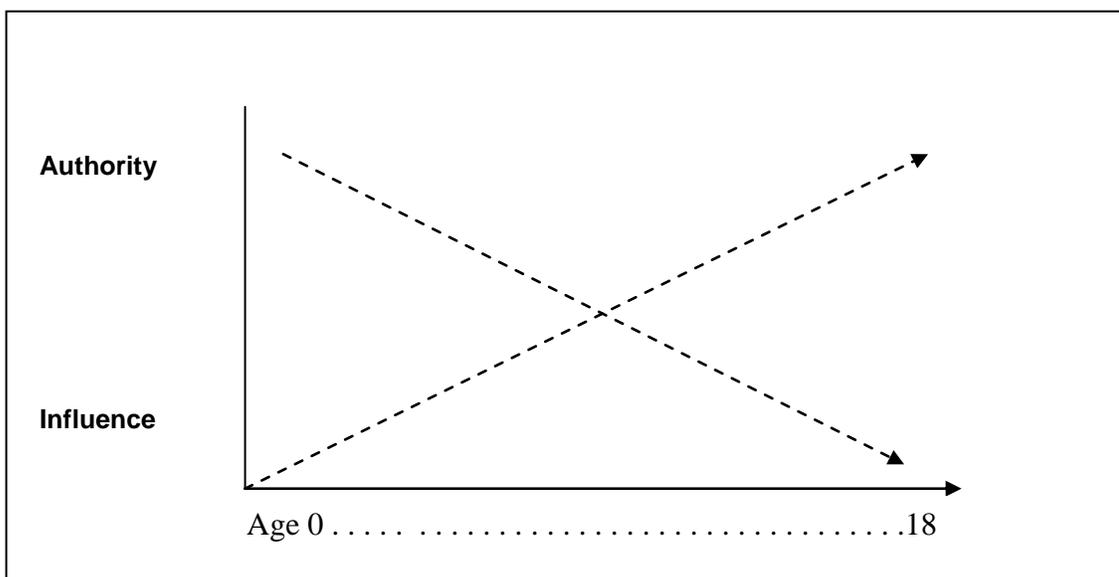
*He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.”* (Psalms 78:0–8 ESV)

- Fathers teach their children (G-1 teaches G-2)
- So the next generation, yet unborn may know G-2 teaches G-3)
- And arise and tell their children (G-3 teaches G-4)

### B. Moving from Discipline to Discipleship

#### AUTHORITY VS. INFLUENCE

Understanding the change between parenting toddlers and parenting Teens<sup>i</sup>



“Baby may cry in protest, but Mom and Dad have the initiative. Even the young toddler is somewhat intimidated by size. Parents may buttress commands – “I told you to sit down!” – by physically placing him in the chair. The parents’ word is law because they have the physical capacity to enforce it. As a child grows, the ability to control him that way diminishes. The more Junior grows and develops physically and mentally, what you may accomplish through raw authority diminishes.”<sup>ii</sup>  
-Tedd Tripp

## 1. Practical Examples:

You hear your two children fighting downstairs. Your son hits his sister. In the past that was automatic consequences – could be corporal punishment, or no screen time for the rest of the day. But instead now you interview your son.

Outcome #1 you ask your son what he did and he

1. Admits his fault
2. connect it to his desires
3. Shows remorse
4. Is willing to engage God
5. Confesses his sin and repents of his anger
6. Then you treat him like a young man

Outcome #2 You ask your son what he did and he

1. Blame shifts
2. Accuses you of unfairness
3. Shows no remorse
4. Is not willing to do anything
5. Whines and cries like a baby
6. Then you treat him like a child

2. Behaviorism vs. Gospel parenting – If we enforce strict discipline we can create outwardly compliant kids who either live a double life and keep us thinking they are obedient, or our children suppress their desires for fear of discipline or disappointing us. But once that artificial governor is removed—like when they go away to college (and you are neither present to discipline or present to see) they spiral out of control.

The law does a very good job of exposing your child’s sin, but it has no power whatsoever to deliver your child from it. . . . the law has no ability to create the lasting change in your child that every parent longs for. . .but there is something else I need to say here. It’s not that as parents we tend to put all the eggs of our hope for our children in the basket of the law, but we also tend to replace God’s perfect law with a sorry human best. Somehow, somehow God’s law gets replaced by our law—a law that’s sadly driven by our craving for affirmation, control, peace, success, and reputation.” Paul Tripp<sup>iii</sup>

3. Discipleship is not difficult.
  - a. Discipleship is simply proactive instruction, that is teaching them what they need before they need it. So often parents are surprised by the struggles of their children and then scramble to try and cram instruction into a crisis. Don't wait until after your children have played football in poison ivy to teach them what poison ivy looks like.
  - b. The discipling of your children need not take on the feel of a classroom.
  - c. Discipleship should be a part of the daily routine and need not take a lot of time.
  - d. Father/son and mother/daughter relationships must take top priority.
2. Build a value for reading in your children's lives.
  - Words are a gift from God which are ultimately designed as our messengers of truth. "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ." (Romans 10:17, emphasis mine)
  - Reading is a prerequisite to studying God's word. We tend to protect our children from challenge rather than expect them to study.
- C. Our example in keeping the gospel central carries a great influence with our children. If our life is centered on the Gospel we are sending a clear message.**
  - a. Look to build influence now.
  - b. Self-sufficiency cripples us to the Gospel – what is your prayer life like?
    1. So much of what we do, we do in disregard of our need of daily grace. We would be wise to remember that all that we have and do is made possible through the Gospel. *"Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— [14] yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." (James 4:13-15, ESV)*
    2. Though scripture encourages prayers offered in the secret of our closet, we should not hide our devotional lives from our children. Let them know how the Lord via the gospel ministered to your heart in your morning prayers.

c. The purpose and role of confession and transparency in our lives.

1. Confession is a window for our children to look into our lives and see the grace of God in Christ at work within us. Of course we should confess sins against our children but confessing our sins generally where appropriate gives us the opportunity to also confess the grace of God in Christ for forgiveness.

“Listen to the talk that goes on in your home. How much of it is impatient and unkind? How often are words spoken out of selfishness and personal desire? How easily do outbursts of anger occur? How often do we bring up past wrongs? How do we fail to communicate hope? How do we fail to protect? How often do our words carry threats that we have “had it” and are about to quit? Stop and listen, and you will see how much we need to hold our talk to this standard of love, and how often the truth we profess to speak has been distorted by our sin. It is time for many of us to confess that we have not know the way of love. Our words have hindered, not helped, what the Lord is seeking to do.”<sup>iv</sup> Paul Tripp War of Words

2. There are two ways to effectively teach our children. First, by doing things right. Secondly, and perhaps even more effective is to make mistakes but then admit to and confess our failures and ask for forgiveness sets an example of the outworking of the power of the Spirit in our own lives.

**D. Legalism and behaviorism crowd out the gospel. (Review Chart)**

- a. We can not be the Holy Spirit
- b. More rules won't get us more grace
  1. When our children are toddlers we necessarily fall into a pattern of disciplining them for sinful behavior. As our children grow we can be tempted to simply increase the reach of the law.
  2. Consider the way God relates to us:

He does not deal with us according to our sins,  
nor repay us according to our iniquities.  
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;  
as far as the east is from the west,  
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.  
(Psalm 103:10-12 ESV)

- c. If we parent to achieve outward compliance and leave the heart unchecked our kids will explode into the world when the pressure is off.
- d. The place of faith, church, and the word
  - Our children can not be convinced of proper priorities by words alone. They need to see our priorities fleshed out in practice.
  - “But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” (James 2:18) Notice the comparison words against deeds.
- e. The practice of evangelism counts
- f. The presence and prominence worship in our lives

**E. It takes work to keep the Gospel central in your home**

- a. Restart family devotions. I say restart because few parents remain consistent with devotions and benefit from regular reminders to jump in again. Don't be discouraged for what you are not doing.
  - b. Review the Sunday messages and ask good questions.
  - c. Don't allow the world to crowd out your family worship.
- F. Parenting is more than God helping parents change their children. It is also God helping children change their parents.
- 1. If you are running into a wall and are losing faith quickly in the midst of a struggle, God may be allowing the slowness of change in your child to expose your need for character growth.
  - 2. Look for and be quick to recognize the work God is doing in your heart and be willing to bring others into your struggle. It is amazing how much faith we have for other children's struggles and how little faith we can have for the struggles of our own.
  - 3. Parenting in community affords us prayer support and accountability. Let's not be critical of each other, but let's support one another in this wonderful endeavor.

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<sup>i</sup> Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, pg. 97.

<sup>ii</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>iii</sup> Tripp, Paul. *Parenting, 14 Gospel Principles*. Pg. 51.

<sup>iv</sup> Tripp, Paul David. *War of Words*.229.