

Getting to the Heart of Parenting

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Leader's Guide to be used with the conference on DVD
(Ten 25 minute sessions on 3 DVDs)
for Small Groups or Individuals

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GETTING TO THE HEART OF PARENTING

LEADERS' GUIDE

As leader, you will facilitate moving the group through the material. You do not need to be an expert on the topics but you will be best prepared if you watch the DVDs beforehand. You may also want to review the notes in this leader's guide and be prepared to share your own thoughts.

Opening Discussion Questions: These questions are designed to create discussion and stimulate initial thoughts that will help participants connect the ideas of each session to their own lives. They are designed to be discussed before viewing the material of each session. If you are leading a small group or class, you should consider how much time is available and limit the opening discussion based on the amount of time you have. You may need to select only one opening question that you think would be most "discussable" by your group. Another option is to have participants share something from their *Personal Reflection* or *Getting to the Heart of Your Children* sections (see below) from the previous session.

Scripture: These passages are ones that are referred to in the session.

Notes: The notes section follows the slides on the DVD and provides a place for notes to be written down and referred back to.

Review Questions: These questions are intended to help the participant review the content presented in each session. Possible answers for each question are included below.

Group Discussion Questions: These questions also help review the material presented, but they also help participants think more deeply about issues and provide an opportunity for participants to share their own experiences and knowledge with others. Possible answers to these questions are sometimes provided.

Personal Reflection: These questions are designed to help participants examine themselves as parents. No answers are given in the Leader's Guide to these questions; however, it can be beneficial to provide time during the session for participants to be able to answer these questions on their own.

Getting to the Heart of your Children: These ideas are designed to help participants apply the principles and key ideas in their roles as parents.

<p>NOTE: Encourage yourself and/or your group to write down answers as much as possible. Writing it down helps stimulate thinking and strengthens commitments.</p>

SESSION 1

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. The primary learning community in God's eyes is the family. *Follow-up questions:* What role do the parents play in that purpose? They are the educators. What role then does the church, state, and schools play? The church equips the parents, the state and schools support you.
2. It is absolutely necessary to talk about God within your family because God is the basis of true knowing—we cannot fully know anything without first understanding the existence, the character and the plan of God.
3. The purpose of speaking to our children about God is for them to see how all of creation reflects his glory; to give them an awe of God; to turn their attention away from themselves.

SESSION 2

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. The connection between our children being interpreters and parents' responsibility to teach them God's word: God's word provides the proper interpretation of our experiences; children will make incorrect interpretations without God's word that will lead them to live life incorrectly.
2. Our children reveal themselves as worshippers by what they demand; by how they react to not getting their way; by how they manipulate; by what is most important to them; by how they spend their time. [Participants may also share specific examples].
3. As a social community, there should be importance placed on the relationships based on sacrificial love toward each other.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why is sacrificial love necessary to a healthy social community? [Some possible answers include: it is a model of God's love toward us; it allows for needs to be provided for; it builds trust].
2. How do we create a redemptive community in our families? [We allow our children to make mistakes and not hold it against them; we ask for and offer forgiveness from each other and from God (including asking our children for forgiveness when we mess up); we are honest about our weaknesses; we encourage honesty rather than self-righteousness].
3. How will we know if we are being successful parents? [Our children move toward God; our children are growing in showing sacrificial love; our children are valuing God and what God values; our children are amazed by God].

SESSION 3

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. The "heart" is our thoughts, feelings, desires; it is the "causal core of our personhood"; it directs and rules our behavior. *Follow-up question:* Since the heart directs our thoughts and behavior, what should we focus on in parenting and training our children? Their hearts.
2. Apple nailing means we are only dealing with behaviors—the outward image instead of getting to the root of the problem which is our children's hearts. We "apple nail" when: we threaten; we manipulate; or use guilt.
3. Change begins to take place in the heart when the sinner accurately see his/her own sin; confesses and takes responsibility for his/her own behavior.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What will look, sound and feel different when we parent the hearts of our children and not just their behavior? [It often will take more time; it will feel more satisfying though, because we are addressing the root cause and we are investing in lasting change; it will sound softer, calmer, more in control (yelling is often a form of manipulation); it will look and sound like a conversation; it will involve listening and understanding; you will ask questions like: What did you do? What were you thinking? What could you have done differently?].
2. Why does threatening, manipulating and using guilt not really work? [Because it doesn't change the heart and the motivations that produce our behavior; it is a temporary fix; it actually feeds into their selfish nature].
3. What needs to first happen for your children to be able to confess to their own sin? [They need to gently and productively be made aware of their sin].

SESSION 4

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is probably happening in our own hearts when we are frustrated with having to discipline our child? [Some possible answers include: we are probably seeking our own comfort; we are angry because we did not get what we wanted; we may be angry because we want control].
2. We can look at the sin and conflicts of our children as a positive experience because we know God is working and bringing opportunities for our child to change. We can see it as a moment of ministry—we are God's instrument for change in the child's life.
3. For these moments of conflict to become moments of ministry, we need to confess our own sins that cause us to be angry or self-focused; we need to speak in a way so that they are willing to listen; we need to ask questions to understand and to move our children toward seeing their own hearts.

SESSION 5

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Teaching your children submission to authority is positive because it teaches them that they will always live under authority (God is not going to relinquish his authority to them); it will help them to accept your authority as they grow up; they will gain freedom which comes from living according to God's design and authority; they will not grow up believing they are autonomous; living under authority is a form of protection.
2. We should train our children to live under our authority as a means of teaching them how to live under God's authority. Living under God's authority should be obedient, willing submission; not challenging; not looking to excuse our rebellion; not delaying; with honor.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What specific things can parents do to model to their children how to show respect? [Some ideas include: parents should show respect to each other—how they talk and listen to each other; not interrupting each other; not commanding each other; using manners; parents should show respect to their children and others in the same way].

2. How will children know whether their parents are submissive to God's authority? [Some ideas include: parents talking about things they do out of obedience to God; parents not grumbling or complaining but trusting God; they are thankful; they give biblical reasons for their decisions].

SESSION 6

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. The danger of being inconsistent in your exercise of authority is that it makes it confusing to the child to know how to relate to you; in a moment when you need them to obey they may not because you have not been consistent in exercising authority; it makes a child feel insecure; it creates bitterness in the child because they feel set-up for failure and your disapproval.
2. Disciplining out of anger or impatience is based on our mood and whether we want or see the need for discipline, whereas disciplining to rescue is based on seeing a dangerous attitude and wanting to help and rescue the child; disciplining out of anger is focused on the parents' wants instead of the good of the child; disciplining out of anger creates confusion in the child because he/she'll never be sure when you will get angry; disciplining out of anger does not speak to the heart of the child but only to his behavior.
3. Spanking is appropriate because it teaches a child to connect foolishness with pain; spanking is appropriate when there is a clear act of disobedience to authority; spanking is appropriate when it is not administered in anger or in public.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Describe the difference between abusive discipline and loving discipline. [Abusive discipline is driven by selfishness, anger, or revenge; it uses excessive or inappropriate pain; it is not controlled. Loving discipline is driven by a desire to teach and rescue the child from foolishness; it is self-controlled and appropriate to the situation; it involves praying for and with the child; it is not done in anger].

SESSION 7

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. God defines good character because he is God and is our creator; God's standard for good character is found in the Bible. We rebel against God's standard for good character because of sin. We set up idols that determine our functional character—idols of self, acceptance, comfort, power, etc.
2. We base our character—the motives of our hearts—on what we worship and value.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is required to train our children in character? [Time; patience; being aware of how we deal with conflict teaches them and models character to them; work; talking to them about their heart and motivations (what idol is controlling their behavior; being honest about your own struggles with idols).
2. What questions can we be asking our children when opportunities arise to reveal their heart and develop good character? [What is important to you right now? What should be important to

you right now? What would be the loving thing for you to do? How can you show love? Who are you wanting to please—God or yourself?].

SESSION 8

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Tools for character development:
 - a. Instruction.
 - b. Correction—what would have been a better way?
 - c. Entreaty—tenderly care and plead for their heart; explain the dangers of poor character—use yourself as an example.
 - d. Rebuke—explain how their behavior fell short of God’s standard.
2. We can evaluate the character of our children by seeking answers to:
 - a. How is the child’s relationship to God?
 - b. How does your child view him/herself in relation to character?
 - c. Do they value their own character development?
 - d. How does your child relate to others?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the importance of being honest with ourselves and to our children about our own flaws? [It sets a model to our children; it can help us avoid being blind to our own idols and from being hypocritical; it strengthens our own character so that we can then instruct our children].

SESSION 9

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. It is important to give your child room to make his/her own decisions during this time because it provides an opportunity for them to learn how to make decisions; it provides them with the opportunity to make mistakes and still have your support and help; it provides you with the opportunity to correct and instruct.
2. Preventative describes a relationship when the teen submits to your authority and values your input; a corrective relationship is when you do need to correct the teen because he/she occasionally steps over the boundaries but the teen responds to correction; a protective relationship is when you have a teen who consistently rebels and does not respect your authority and correction.
3. Being goal-oriented in parenting means responding based on goals and morals; having a purpose and direction in how you respond; not reactive; requires understanding your teen and the struggles he/she faces.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What kinds of decisions are good opportunities for your child to practice decision making? [Some ideas may include: decisions when there may be consequences that are not permanent;

decisions that are not immoral, decisions when they put into practice character you have taught them].

2. What are the challenges to correcting and protecting our teens? What are some reasons for taking seriously the responsibility to correct and protect them? [Some ideas may include: they do not want to be corrected or protected; the worldly culture is pushing them in an opposite direction. We should still work toward it because it is their spiritual condition and eternal future at stake].
3. How should we present wisdom and correction to a teen when he/she does not necessarily seek or want it? [Some ideas may include: not self-righteously but with humility and grace; not “lording it over them” but with love].

SESSION 10

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Responding to falsehood issues with authority means when our teen believes a lie we increase the rules or we pull in the boundaries. The problem with this is that it does not reach the heart of the teen—you are dealing with behavior.
2. A harvest mentality is that we will earn what we have worked for—reap what we have sown; teens need to be shown how their choices lead to consequences; parents need to help them lovingly, patiently and gently.
3. A “treasure mentality” is that everything we do is related to what we value and treasure.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How can we help our teens see the beauty of God’s way? [Some ideas include: share it with them; don’t be silent; let them know how God and his truth help your marriage and your life].
2. How can we help our teens combat the sexual temptations of the culture? [Some ideas may include: setting a good example by what we watch and wear; speaking to them about sexual issues and the destruction that can result from sexual immorality; discussing where their priorities lie].