

Foundations of Parenting: Practical Tips

I. Routines to teach and model truth:

Overarching goal: Goal is to faithfully image God to my child, which includes providing an environment that is conducive to my child understanding the superiority of God and His ways and making it easy for him to choose that way

- *Financial planning – if you are living on a budget, be very open about that. You don't have to share your budget, though you might want to as they grow older, but you can allow them to see the freedom of living within a budget.*
 - *We used the Crown Financial Ministry money jar that has three sections: church, save, spend. We added to other jars that the kids decorated that were for giving to others and saving for gifts for each other.*
 - *We started out with the 10% tithe, 10% save and 80% spend. But since they had no expenses, 80% was way too much. We ended up with 10% church, 20% save, 10% giving to others, 10% family giving, 50% spend – and that was plenty!*
 - *We wanted them to have a way to earn money but chose not to pay for chores done. Instead we did an initiative chart that was put on their bedroom door. They had a list of tasks to do daily and if they did them well, without being asked, they got a check mark for initiative. At the end of the month, the check marks were turned into money that they then divided up.*
- *Teaching Sex to our children. Janet has a session she did for a MOPS group on talking to our children about sex if you'd like that material. The principle would be to help them see that God's plan is good, better than the world, and that this isn't an area that you avoid!*
 - *Start the conversation early – before they know they are supposed to be embarrassed!*
 - *Answer their questions as they have them*
 - *Consider this as any other topic – one that you'll discuss on many occasions*
 - *Work through your own issues with sexual intimacy so that you're able to discuss its beauty*
 - *We used books with illustrations, science and health books, to show them about their own bodies and answer questions*
 - *We chose to make it a special weekend the first time we went through all of it – Brent with Josh and later Janet with Karis. We went to a hotel for an overnight to read the books, talk about the joy of becoming a godly man or woman and enjoy time together. The kids only remember a little about that but it was a good memory and made it easier for them to continue to ask questions.*
 - *The resource center has a series of books from very small through puberty on this subject to read with your children.*
 - *Early on we taught them that God's purpose for their body was not for themselves but for whomever they would marry.*
- *Gospel oriented material*
 - *The Biggest Story by Kevin DeYoung*
 - *Gospel Story Bible by Marty Machowski*
 - *Jesus Storybook Bible by Sally Lloyd Jones*
 - *Leading your Child to Christ by Marty Machowski*
 - *The Ology by Marty Machowski for learning the character of God*
- *Bible study options/ideas*

- *We had a morning routine that included time with God. Everyone's routine will be different but here is ours just for ideas. After they got up and got dressed and ate/brushed teeth, we sat on the couch for "Bible time." When they couldn't read, I read it to them. When they could read some, they read it out loud or while sitting next to me.*
 - *Ages 3-7: The Children's Discovery Bible Devotions*
 - *Early readers: Kay Arthur's Discover4Yourself Series*
- *Bedtime routine ideas*
 - *We didn't do this EVERY night. Something is always better than nothing ☺!*
 - *As they get in bed allow them to tell you what they'd like and LISTEN! Not all or even most of our conversations were about the gospel but we desired to build an environment where they talked to us about whatever was on their mind, with the hope that they would continue to do that as they got older. And they did!*
 - *If I'm saturated by the gospel in my own thinking, more and more, I'll see opportunities as they share. As they tell me about something fun, we can thank God for giving them that sweet gift, etc.*
 - *Ask them one way they saw the goodness of God in their life that day.*
 - *Pray with them – you praying for them and them praying too.*
- *Rhythms:*
 - *Write out overarching goals for when they leave your home (begin with the end in mind). Annually we tried to get away, review them, reflect on each child over the past year and set out specific goals for each child on areas of weakness or strengths to grow, etc. This kept us focused as it's easy to drift!*
 - *Build serving into the regular schedule so it is a way of life. For a few years for us it was Meals on Wheels – some great memories and serving lessons learned here!*
 - *If you have extended family members with whom you could share your goals, enlist them in specific ways to help you. Some goals are specific skills that they might be able to teach them. The majority of ours were character related but also had life skills included.*
 - *Regular "date nights" can be a special time. Brent had a "secret" restaurant he took our daughter to – she loved that!*

Safety and abuse:

- *We don't recommend requiring your child to show physical affection. That is definitely a family decision, but it can make it difficult for them to protect themselves.*
- *They should be required to be respectful to all and to trust you when you are with them and ask them to interact with an adult. But we would recommend giving them a way to be respectful without hugging someone if they desire. Maybe they can be taught they can shake someone's hand unless they are comfortable with a hug, etc. They can respectfully say, "No thank you, may I shake your hand?"*
- *You can let family know that you aren't requiring this so they understand why.*
- *It's not about not trusting that particular person but not building a habit or expectation in a child who won't know how to refuse in another situation.*
- *We talked about situations like this from an early age and even did role playing. "What if someone asked to touch you/touched you in a private area?" "What if they said that if you told you'd get in trouble?" "What if they said you need to keep a secret – any secret?" "What if they said that if you told, they would hurt your parents and it would be your fault?" Yes, we did this at a young age and they were able to communicate why that was wrong.*

- *We discussed our “job” given to us by God: it’s to provide them guidance and to protect them. We can’t do the job God gave us if they don’t tell us something.*
- *We discussed God’s “bigness”. No one can hurt mommy or daddy unless God allowed it. It’s always right to tell and let mommy and daddy decide what should be done. Their job before God is to tell us, our job is to make the rest of the decisions.*
- *ANYONE that said, don’t tell mom or dad: they knew that then they were required to tell us – there is no decision for them to make – that is the right thing to do.*
- *Respect the fact that some adults make them uncomfortable – don’t minimize it even if it’s for silly reasons – make it easy for them to tell you and discuss together how to handle it respectfully.*

Respect/Listening/General obedience/:

Overarching goal: *Goal is to faithfully image God to my child, which includes providing an environment that is conducive to my child understanding the superiority of God and His ways and making it easy for him to choose that way*

- *Training is the first step – ensure your child knows what is expected and how to do it. Practice, practice, practice! Make it a game to obey.*
 - *Put them somewhere in the room and practice saying, “Come here.” Praise when they obey, help them if they are struggling.*
 - *Teach them to touch your arm when they want your attention instead of interrupting...pretend to be on the phone and practice what they should do.*
 - *Discuss asking for a drink and not whining or demanding. Then – practice!*
 - *If their mind races and they struggle to focus – practice! Tell them you are going to ask them to do 3 things. Ask them to listen, see if they can remember them and see how fast they can do them.*
 - *If they don’t sit still well – practice! Show them a timer, give them a book and practice sitting quietly for 1 minute. They can see the timer moving so they know it WILL end! Then lengthen the time.*
- *We won’t be given the opportunity to teach until they are under our authority. That has to be first.*
- *If the heart attitude is control, there is a deceived belief that it is best for him to be in control. This will usually come up in a variety of areas, not just one (refusing to look at you when told, etc.). Be on the look out and have a predetermined plan for rooting out that deception.*
- *If a believer, discussing why it is better that God is in control (He knows all, He is all wise, He has promised that all that He allows works for gospel purposes in my life.) He loves us better than we love ourselves. We would destroy ourselves with our love. Review God’s plan for children to obey their parents – this is the child’s reason to obey – obeying their parents is obeying God and staying under His wise and good control.*
- *Be consistent in not allowing it. For example, if your child is told to look at you and doesn’t...allowing him to get away with it feeds the deception that he is in control and will lead to more control battles. Follow through with consequences.*
- *Defiance in the response will return you to the information on the need for first time obedience and the benefit of having consequences thought through in advance.*

- *In any area where change is needed for the child to be more like Jesus, start where they are, and take incremental steps. Help them grow slowly.*
- *Lack of first-time obedience actually means we didn't follow through on consequences when they didn't obey the first time.*
 - *We sang the song "I will obey the first time I'm told, I will obey right away. Never asking why; never with a sigh. I will obey right away." If we began to him it, they knew what it meant!*
 - *It sneaks up on us. Janet remembers being on the phone with Brent expressing her frustration that she had to say something two or three times before they listened. Brent asked why she said it the second time!*
 - *What you allow, you teach is ok. If I allow less than first time obedience, I'm training them to wait and obey later. I encourage their disobedience and provoke myself to anger!*
- *Selfishness: the heart attitude appears to be that they are what's most important. The deception is that they believe that living for their own pleasure, living for themselves, will be the most satisfying way.*
 - *Provide them with opportunities to put others above themselves and taste and see that God is good. Serve at Meals on Wheels, go to the hospital and sing for others, clean someone's home who is sick, etc.*
 - *Use natural consequences where possible (i.e. if they rush to be first all of the time, when they do that, ensure that they are last, etc.)*
 - *Model the joy of living for others yourself!*
 - *Visit someone whose children have a need and have them bring a toy to share.*
 - *We set up a "store" with the kids' toys before Christmas one year for a family going through a hard time. The kids helped set it up and the family was able to take whatever toys would be a blessing to their kids.*
 - *Find fun ways to love others. Going on a "secret mission" to bless someone without them knowing it.*
- *Dealing with fear. Listen first to why they are afraid. Is there anything to it? Are they struggling to control their thinking?*
 - *Teach them how to take their thoughts captive. We gave them a list of things to do before calling out to us in the night*
 - *Pray*
 - *Read the scripture that they had drawn and put on their ceiling (using their flashlight ☺)*
 - *Think about 5 things that make them happy*
 - *Get up and go to the bathroom*
 - *If after that they were still afraid, they could call.*
 - *They liked the song from the Bible verse, "When I am afraid I will trust in You" from Hide Em in Your Heart. From that vignette, Josh started sleeping with his hand on his Bible to remind him that God was with him.*
 - *Help them face unreasonable fears early so it doesn't grow. Josh went from afraid of big dogs, to all dogs, to dogs who were on leashes on the opposite side of the street!, to cats, etc. Brent took him to pet a cat while Brent was there and required that Josh trust his dad not to put him in danger and pet the cat.*
- *Food issues: Decide what is important to you and be consistent. If you want your child to eat healthier foods, only offer those.*
 - *Require all foods be tried a certain number of times.*
 - *Give only a bite or very small portion at first.*
 - *Refrain from making individualized meals based on kids' preferences.*

- *Selective Listening ☺*
 - *When you talk to your children, ask them to look at you and if it's helpful, have them repeat back what you said.*
 - *If they have heard, do not repeat yourself. Decide ahead of time on appropriate consequences and follow through. Children tend to learn to listen better if they want to avoid the consequences. If you're willing to repeat yourself, they're willing to let you!*
- *Explaining why.*
 - *We didn't want to provoke them to anger by asking things of them for no reason but also didn't want to teach them that they could determine their obedience based on whether they understood or agreed with our explanation. They should obey their God given authorities regardless.*
 - *Therefore, if they asked "why" when asked to do something, we told them we'd be happy to explain that to them AFTER they obeyed. Interestingly, most of the time they didn't bother asking again afterward.*
- *Rewards vs. expected chores.*
 - *God wants us to work hard and be productive and doesn't always give us something materially as a result. And as members of our home, we wanted them to help maintain it as we also did. Therefore, we wanted our kids to help maintain the house without getting money or rewards for that.*
 - *On the other hand, we wanted them to be able to go above and beyond and to be rewarded for it to also learn to manage money.*
 - *Therefore, we made an initiative chart and put it on each bedroom door. Before they can read it can be in pictures. It had a list of daily chores that were just expected of them. If they performed them well without being asked to do them, they got a mark for initiative. If I had to ask them or remind them to do it, they still had to do it but didn't get a checkmark. At the end of the month we added up the marks and they earned money – I think it was a dime for each checkmark. Some earn treats or dessert out or something instead.*
 - *As they mature, it's appropriate to let them know that certain things that were considered "above and beyond" are now expected. With increased freedom (as happens as they mature) comes increased responsibility.*
- *Interrupting.*
 - *Since we are frequently doing other things, it is important that our kids have a way of appropriately getting our attention. Otherwise, they'll continue to say our names over and over and interrupt.*
 - *Certainly, teach first that interrupting is not respectful.*
 - *Then teach them an appropriate way to let you know they'd like your attention.*
 - *We told them they could walk up to us and put their hand on our arm. We would then put our hand on top of theirs so they know we're aware. Then they needed to wait patiently until we were in a position to break our conversation and see what they wanted.*
 - *We also created our own hand signal that meant, "be quiet" so they would know to stop talking at that point and wait for us.*
- *Constant reminders.*
 - *Praise them for their willingness to obey when reminded and then teach that they now need to work to remember to do this without being reminded.*
 - *Let them know that either if they do this task without reminders, there will be a reward or let them know that if they do not remember, there will be a consequence. Not necessarily something disciplinary, but a natural consequence. For instance, with the dinner table illustration, possibly start with: Now what am I going to remind you of tonight? And let the child tell you. Then let them know that the next night you're not going to remind them*

and they need to remember on their own. If they do, reward them with maybe staying up a few minutes later or praise or a check mark on their initiative chart! If they forget, they can lose the checkmark – a natural consequence (I maybe even have another checkmark taken away) to help him remember.

- *Time management.*
 - *Recognize that as they are growing up, they aren't very good at thinking long term so immediate pleasure is their priority.*
 - *Are we modeling long term thinking in our own pleasures? Are we teaching why we should limit the time on electronics, etc.?*
 - *Provide them opportunities to taste and see that God's way is better. By forcing them to limit their time, they will experience other things and begin to learn that it is more satisfying. They may not see that for a long time, but in the meantime, you're establishing good habits.*
- *Provide opportunities for high energy kids to expend a lot of energy!! Race around the house, etc.*
- *If sitting still is hard, start small, set the timer for 1 minute where he can see, sit on the couch next to him and "practice." Praise successes and help him build that up.*

Aggression/Anger:

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- *Outbursts of Anger, i.e. yelling at the table – possibly wanting control, wanting attention*
 - *Ensure you have taught first. Model the behavior you expect. Talk quietly to him and mimic how he should talk, how he should ask for food, etc.*
 - *Yelling cannot get him what he wants or I have taught him to yell. If he is yelling for food, no food is given until he asks in the right way with the right tone of voice. He may end up going a meal without food.*
 - *Once he's been taught and knows what to do, yelling at the table might mean he is taken to another room while everyone else finishes dinner and he has lost the opportunity to eat.*
 - *See overriding principles under general obedience heading.*
- *Review chapter 2 in the Heart of Anger book by Lou Priolo for ways that you may be provoking your child to anger.*

Parent's anger/sinful parenting/parental responsibility:

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- *You cannot deal biblically with your child's behavior if you are not consistently confessing and repenting of your own sin.*
- *As your children see you taking seriously your own desire to grow and learn more, you're modeling that for them. It's ok to not understand it all – how do they see you work to understand more and to obey what you do understand?*
- *Time must first be spent acknowledging your own pride and humbly working on growth personally. Then you will have more compassion on the sins of your child – they are more like us than we'd like to admit.*
- *I must repent of my wrong goals: ease, efficiency. I don't want to have to repeat myself – I'm lazy, I don't want to go through the discipline process right now – I have a right to a little "me" time – I deserve to be obeyed and respected, etc. These idols show me that I'm actually very like my child!*
- *Remember my goal is parenting is to image God to my child. God didn't make a mistake in allowing their sinful heart to surface right now at this time. I must not fight what God has allowed and be willing to deal with the behavior regardless of its impact on my time.*
- *I must be intentional in how I parent – not doing what comes naturally – but basing my thoughts and actions on biblical principles. This takes work and many of us don't want to work hard at parenting.*
- *If the goal is to image God, it isn't to conform to society's expectations or to protect my reputation. I will leave that in God's hands.*
- *Having a predetermined plan for how to respond to disobedience will help you not to be provoked to anger.*

Practical tips for "in the moment":

- *Put your child somewhere safe – if small, a play pen, if older, send to room – while you get alone with God to confess your anger. Think through what is going on in your heart – what are you wanting more than you want to image God in this moment? Respect? Peace? Efficiency?*
- *Deal with child after getting the log out of your own eye. If you sinned against him, humble yourself and confess that.*
- *Still responsible to discipline your child.*

Perseverance:

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You said it: PRACTICE!

- *Your focus must be on living for God and not your schedule. If you are working daily to orient your life around honoring the Lord, you will more quickly see that God is allowing this, at this time, and will be able to ask Him for help to respond biblically and lovingly.*
- *When I'm living vertically – for God – I can be discouraged with the horizontal but will continue to have hope that God has promised that He is FOR me and that all of the trials He allows must*

*how to gospel purposes in my life. Their purpose is to conform me more and more to Jesus.
Living this way is the best gift you can give your children!*

Coming together as a couple:

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- *Study your roles as parents and the different roles for fathers and mothers according to the Scripture. The Bible must be your source of truth, not what you are used to or what makes sense to you.*
 - *Throughout Scripture we see that the head of the family is the husband/father. In Eph 6:4 it is fathers who are told not to exasperate but to teach. Fathers will give a unique account for the direction and management of their families. Mothers have been given the unique role of carrying out the father's direction and representing the father in his absence.*
 - *Children are commanded to obey their parents, not just their fathers.*
 - *Fathers will be held accountable for setting the direction but both are authority figures to their children.*
 - *When a father is home, he should be overseeing and leading in discipline and obedience.*
- *Pray for each other and help each other. Be a safe place for the other's weaknesses to be exposed. If you see your spouse being impatient, don't judge, but help! You're on the same team with the same goal!*
- *Seek counsel and determine together from biblical principles, what issues will be non-negotiables in your family. This takes time. Parenting is not a sprint but a marathon!*
- *Talk about your spouse in a way that encourages your children to love, respect and build relationships with them.*
- *To build better relationships and conversations takes time and looking for ways to enter their worlds and do what they enjoy – even if it's silly to you.*

Discipline:

“How do you balance discipline and grace in parenting?”

Falsehood: Discipline is punitive and not corrective.

Truth: Biblical discipline is lovingly corrective to God's beautiful ways and is grace.

- *Imaging God means valuing what He values and he values grace-filled training discipline. God's discipline is a part of His grace and an evidence of His love (Hebrews 12). My discipline should be filled with grace.*
- *False dichotomy between grace and discipline*
- *Biblical discipline IS grace*
- *Anything less confuses and tempts to disobedience*
 - *Am I tempted to call it "grace" when I don't want to discipline or when I don't want to upset my child?*

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- *To image God in this area, we can see how God parents us: His expectations are clear, He has taught us what He wants from us, He has promised us rewards as a result of our obedience, He has told us up front the consequences of our disobedience. He is faithful and consistent. He keeps His word.*
 - *Ensure you have taught the behavior/attitude you expect.*
 - *Ensure he is capable of obeying (not asking a 2-year-old to tie his shoes)*
 - *Praise obedience*
 - *Consistently enforce the consequences for disobedience, every time!*
- *Decide on the consequences for disobedience ahead of time and then when it happens, **you aren't as prone to sinful anger**; you just follow through.*
- *Suggested corporal discipline for*
 - *Direct disobedience (pick your battles—do not give a command unless you believe it is important and you are willing to follow through with discipline)*
 - *Hitting another*
 - *Lying*
- *Every other form of discipline should be creatively appropriate for the offense*
- *Choosing battles based upon what are the most important character qualities you desire to see in your child. The first one should be obedience to authority—since we are all under God's authority, the second one should be love/serving others, then working hard...diligence...etc.*
- *You can discipline while grieving their sinful choice and without being sinfully angry yourself.*
- *Discipline is a great opportunity to share the gospel again and pray for God to help them understand and commit their lives to Jesus and have His help to obey.*
- *The end of discipline should be a very sweet, warm time.*
- *Discipline until a submissive heart*
- *Discipline is not a substitute for obedience. After disciplining, he still needs to obey or for some children, they'd rather be spanked than obey. The bottom line is, after being disciplined, he still needs to obey.*
- *As he ages, longer term discipline may be more effective – allow natural consequences as much as possible (if leave the bike out in the rain, it is ruined, he has to buy a new one himself or just forego having one, etc.)*
- *There is no specific age for discontinuing spanking but as a child gets older, other methods will be more effective.*
- *If the behavior isn't changing, assess if you are disciplining biblically: consistently, without sinful anger, fully. If so, remember the goal isn't to change your child but to consistently teach and*

enforce consequences and don't give up! Certainly, also look for creative ways to help him to see that the direction he is heading is destruction.

- If discipline isn't done thoroughly – it can provoke more anger.*
- Discipline can include a variety of things: corporal, removal of privileges, removal of toys or items, natural consequences – if he won't eat, he misses dinner, etc.*
- The younger the child, the less effective long-term discipline is, as he cannot remember that long. Spanking is right away and is also over right away allowing the relationship to stay strong.*

Disciplining in public:

- In public or with company, faithfully imaging God means that what is acceptable doesn't change. Standards don't lessen or grow higher depending on who is around.*
- Delay carrying out of discipline until you are in a private place. If the child is old enough to understand you, you can let them know that you'll have to deal with this when you get home. And remind them frequently on the ride home if they're small!*
- Be willing to be inconvenienced and go home if it's necessary to faithfully parent. Leave the groceries behind; leave the restaurant, leave the room with company in it, etc. if possible.*
- If a child learns that the rules can be broken with others around, it will be harder to help them learn the joy of obedience.*

Extra activities:

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To help us think through these areas, we made a "philosophy" statement about our goals for our children. We answered the questions: What do we want them to be like when they leave our home? What character? What skills and abilities do we believe are important for them to fulfill their roles as God's representative? This helped us think through how we wanted to spend our time. In our case, Janet took them to a teacher's store that taught art when they were little to expose them to it and each was involved in a sport in elementary school but the focus was on serving opportunities. We wrote down our goals and saw that it was the highest priority that they grow to love God and others. Therefore, this had to be true in how we spent our time as well. Serving and learning at church would not be sacrificed for lower priorities.

Work/Life/Marriage Balance:

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Falsehood: My child needs constant relationship stimulation. My child really doesn't need my relationship.

Truth: God's way of life is inherently designed to contain both time alone and time with people in relationships. Our training must help them be productive in both. But life is about relationships.

- I can't always be there for my kids – a great opportunity to help them see the superiority of God, who is always there*

- *I should value what God values and love what He loves. Therefore, I examine: are the outside tasks being done for the benefit or hindrance of my family? If the hindrance, seek help to realign. If the benefit – explain those benefits where possible and thank God for honoring your efforts.*
- *Have children do work alongside you where possible – teach them the value of doing something productive and how to image God themselves*
- *Show that your family is centered on what pleases God, not child centered or parent centered or world centered!*
- *There will be times when it is best to do other things and your child can be disappointed. And that's ok.*
- *If your rhythm of life doesn't allow you to parent your children, seek God's wisdom and the counsel of others as we know that God will not put you in a position where you are unable to please Him!*

Loving children in difficult circumstances:

Overarching goal: *Goal is to faithfully image God to my child, which includes providing an environment that is conducive to my child understanding the superiority of God and His ways and making it easy for him to choose that way*

- *When we are asked to love to our own hurt, that is when we have the opportunity to be the most like Jesus. And it's certainly supernatural!*
- *This will require time honestly confessing the idols that prevent me from loving when it's hard and it requires time rehearsing and meditating on the gospel to remember how I have been loved and continue to be loved even while I'm struggling with this!*
- *Being a safe place for your children to talk about their hurts, without taking it personally, will be important. Seek out support for yourself to help you be able to respond to them without becoming defensive.*
- *For a new sibling – share with them the joys of being a big brother/sister, the responsibility of it and how they can be a help to you.*
- *Loving our children doesn't mean agreeing with them but it does mean that we are so aware of our own sin and need for a savior that we can relate to them with compassion and love.*
- *If they are in your home, and living a sinful lifestyle, this requires a lot of wisdom and individual situations will require different responses. Please seek counsel from your pastor and others who can help you biblically in your specific situation.*
- *While we can't, and shouldn't, remove all influences from our children, the rhythm of our home should show them a better way.*
 - *Materialism and selfishness. You can provide that regardless of what others are doing. Instead of trying to get other family members to cut back, teach your kids to give. We set up a store in our basement one Christmas season and set out, with their help, many of their toys for a family whose house had burned down. The parents “shopped” in our basement for Christmas and took whatever they wanted. It was rough that they took the cool Fisher Price play set, but so good! The kids got to give to their own hurt and see that it satisfied. We set aside stuffed animals to take to the hospital when their dad made hospital visits to kids. You could sell them at a garage sale and give the proceeds to a ministry. Give them a taste for generosity – and your family members who are giving the toys are helping you 😊.*
 - *As children get older, they can understand. Our son called his grandfather “the gravy train” because he gave them so much! But they knew that wasn't typical at home and we had the rest of the year to teach them a better way while being grateful for grandparents who loved them and wanted to give them things.*

- *Sexuality. Teaching them the purpose of their sexuality from an early age is very important. And, as in many areas, understanding that those who do not know God or understand His ways, are confused in many areas including this one.*

Miscellaneous:

How do you intentionally find those people who will pour out into our children's lives?

- *Make this a matter of prayer regularly.*
- *As you build relationships, encourage your children to spend time with older people and find ways to do that by serving, etc.*
- *We gave a college girl a gift card to take our daughter out and talk with her about certain areas they had in common.*
- *Submit to God that what He doesn't allow is for our good as well. He doesn't make mistakes and if I am appropriately seeking that input and God has chosen not to provide it, that is what is best for now!*

What are the most important things to talk through as a couple before having kids?

- *Discuss how each of you were disciplined and then discuss together what you see in the Scriptures.*
- *Find a couple in the church you respect and ask them to help you think through issues that you might not think of.*
- *Determine now that you will follow biblical principles, not each of your experiences.*
- *Determine now to show each other a lot of grace and believe the best of each other as you learn to parent together!!*
- *Think through the practical implications of the biblical roles of father and mother – not just the traditional views – and how you will apply those in your home.*
- *Most of all, be growing in humility personally!*

Method of education (homeschool, public, private).

Overarching thought process: Goal is to faithfully image God to my kids

Parenting goal is to provide an environment that is conducive to my child understanding the superiority of God and His ways and making it easy for him to choose that way.

- *Write out an educational philosophy document. Not anything fancy, just write out your goals for education – what do you want to accomplish?*
- *Write out what you want your child to look like when he leaves your home – spiritually, practical skills, academics*
- *List your child's strengths and weaknesses*
- *List pros and cons of each educational option – they ALL have pros and cons!*
- *Prayerfully consider what is best for your family, for this particular child, for this year.*
- *Make a decision, realizing that at any point that it doesn't appear to be the best one, it can be changed. What a blessing!*

About Brent and Janet:

How old are your children?

Josh is 21 and Karis is 19.

Both are in college now and we have a semi-empty nest!

What has been your favorite stage to parent (infant, toddler, child, adolescent, young adult, etc.)?

As we've been in each stage it has seemed to be the best one! Each has different challenges though. Younger children are physically demanding, older children are mentally demanding. All of them are demanding ☺! And relating to them now as adults is such a blessing! There is grace for all of our

mistakes – we are grateful!

Our advice:

Be quick to own your sin. Your children don't expect you to be perfect. But especially when you use the Bible to parent them and expect things from them, if you don't ask their forgiveness regularly and work on your own sin...you lose all credibility and you provoke them to anger against you and God.

Model for them how a believer confesses, repents and works at changing!

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