

# **Radiance Parenting**

*Because Raising Infants and Toddlers  
Can Be Overwhelming*

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To submit pre-publication comments and endorsements visit:

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# - Preface -

This book isn't written by a scholar. You won't find that its pages are filled with well researched material.

It WON'T be the answer to all of your parenting questions. You might even NOT want to try some of the ideas with your own children.

That's okay.

We're just normal parents (with struggles) who **started** writing this book as a way to remember. The last few years (which have only been the beginning of our parenting journey) have been sooo...what's the word? Intense? Messy? Meaningful? Miraculous? God has taught us a lot. He's carried us through a lot of things that seemed impossible.

We **finished** writing this book, however, with another purpose in mind. We wanted to share it with YOU. We hope that it becomes two things for you: a LIFESAVER and an ISLAND. Both are helpful when you're surrounded by overwhelming waves.



A lot of times, parenting has felt like overwhelming waves to us. It sometimes feels like we could drowned. If you (like us) feel overwhelmed, we share chapter one to serve as a LIFESAVER.

Although it's helpful, if a lifesaver is all there is (when you're almost drowning), you won't have too much hope for long term survival. You need an ISLAND. You need a solid space on which to place your feet. We share the rest of the chapters to serve as an ISLAND, so that when parenting's waves come, they crash upon big rocks and fade back into the ocean.

## A Few "Housekeeping" Issues

### 1- How to read this book:

We don't necessarily suggest reading this book from front to back. Chapter 1 is a good place to start. After that, however, you may want to flip to the sections that have detailed and practical suggestions for something you're going through right now. (See page 144 for an index of PRACTICAL TIPS.)

### 2- A note for you grammar nerds out there:

- **Who's writing?** Sometimes the paragraphs are written in first person singular. If that's the case, it's Caleb writing (unless Sarah's name is specifically noted). Other paragraphs are written in first person plural. The purpose is to communicate that, although Caleb has invested more hours into this project, what we've learned and experienced on this journey has happened very much together.
- **Which subject pronoun to use??** For the sake of gender neutrality and for having variety, we changed what subject pronoun we used when referring to "the child," "our infant," or "your toddler." Typically we used "he" for one chapter of the book and, without making a note of it, switched to "she" in the next chapter. To make your reading experience more personal, you can replace "he" or "she" with whatever is the gender of your baby/babies/toddler(s).

### 3- A note for the lawyer inside of you:

- **Disclaimer:** My wife and I are not pediatricians. We have no medical training. We do not offer the practical advice contained in this book as the best or only way to care for an infant/toddler. We suggest our readers should defer to the instructions of their child's supervising pediatrician whenever there's a difference of opinion regarding how to care for him or her.

### 4- If you like what you're reading:

**Visit Our Blog - [www.SoMuchHope.com](http://www.SoMuchHope.com)**

We're not perfect or flashy. We have issues. We've failed. *BUT* we're growing. We're carried. We're not what we used to be. We're not yet what we will be. Life has struggles. But, in Christ, there is so much hope. He has made a way for us to live life very much alive.

We mostly write about #parentingHOPE, #marriageHOPE, #excitingGOD, #restGIRLhope and #manupmen.

# - CHAPTER 1 -

## POOP, WTF & JEHOSHAPHAT

**Poop.** I opened the bedroom door and the smell of it smacked me in the face. As I approached the crib, where my youngest daughter was supposed to be 'sleeping,' I realized that this was much more than just an especially dirty diaper that needed changing. Poop was all over my daughter's hands, smeared on her legs, and finger-painted onto her blanket. And to top it all off, she was smiling about it!! It was 5,000 times more disgusting than when I made the mistake of not using enough flimsy Scott Brand toilet paper to wipe my own self. This clean up time was not going to be short, it was not going to be pleasant, AND it was interrupting my kids-are-finally-in-bed movietime.

**WTF.** Here's another little gem of a story. (Maybe I should say store-IES, because it happened way more often than I care to admit.) My first born (18 months old at the time) would freeEAK out when I told her that it was time to move on to the next activity. When I say freak out, I mean that I'd pick her up, and, *BOY*...would she start swinging!



How did she ever learn that it was okay to make Dad's face a punching bag? Had I unknowingly offended my wife so deeply that she decided to become a boxing coach and teach my little daughter straight up left hooks and jabs? I quickly learned to pick her up with her face turned out so she couldn't reach me with her paws. That's when she would start with the back-arching and flailing. All this because I said she had to be done playing so we could get in the car and go to church. It seemed so unreasonable. I came up with a good acronym for what

she'd do during these episodes: **WTF Kid!** It stands for **Whacks, Tensed muscles, Flailing, Kicks, Insults, and Defiance.** Sometimes she wouldn't stop WTFing before church, so I'd carry her outside and have to shove her into the car seat. As I was struggling to pin her down and get her Sunday dress tulle out of the buckle's way, I would think, "What are my neighbors concluding right now?" Then she'd pull out her favorite line to scream at me: "**NO Daddy! I WILL NOT DO WHAT YOU SAY!**" It'd be moments like those when I'd inevitably think, 'What am I doing wrong??'

**Messy.** Ohhhh, so messy. So very, very messy, all the time. Our car. Our house. Our bedroom. Our coat closet and food pantry are so disorganized that sometimes we can't shut the doors. And don't sneak a peek under our kid's car seats...you'll only find layers of stale crackers, cheerios and half-chewed apple pieces under there. Definitely not very sanitary.

**Cries and Screams.** We went through quite a season of seemingly never-ending screaming. For what felt like much longer than a series of months, our oldest daughter would scream when we put her down for sleep. Her screams made it seem like something very life-threatening was undoubtedly going on; that she was suffering. We would check on her repeatedly, though, and generally everything was fine and comfortable. ...except the fact that she didn't want to be in bed. So she screamed. We wondered if she would ever grow out of this phase. Would we have the first teenager in history to scream herself to sleep?

**"Ahhhhh! DAD! Bethany PINCHED me!" "NnnnnooooooooOOOOOOO Sissy!"** These days, it seems like we are forever asking our girls to speak nicely to each other. How many times do I have to say, "If your sister asks you to stop, then you have to stop!"

**Dog-tired.** A lot of times, at the end of the day, we find ourselves *Exhausted with a capital 'E.'* Many nights, we only have the energy to plop on the couch and watch a movie after the girls are in bed. One evening, after I got home from work, my wife and I both ended up sprawled out on different sides of the couch. We looked at each other and said the same thing: "I just don't have the energy to be a parent for these next 3 hours before bedtime."

Have you ever felt like that? If you're a parent, I'm guessing you probably have stories like mine. Raising infants and toddlers can be so exhausting and entirely overwhelming. It can feel like you're constantly trying to keep your head above water. Trying to stay afloat. Trying to keep from drowning.

If you feel that way, this book is written to give you hope. And, right here in chapter 1, I'd like to say two things to overwhelmed parents:

### **1- I'm sorry.**

I wish I could bring a team of people sweeping into your home to give you a break; to take a load off your shoulders.

There have been many times when I've thought, "I don't think I can go on."

One night, I was in the middle of trying to teach my infant to fall asleep in her crib. I was taking the night shift, trying to help my wife get some much needed rest. We were on something like our 100th night in a row of not getting much sleep. Ava was in her crib crying. It had been past 90 minutes of trying to get her to fall back asleep after one of the night feedings. I was laying on the floor. Eyes closed. Face up towards the ceiling. The room was dark. My back was on the ground. My energy-tank-meter-reader was past EMPTY. I prayed, "God I don't think I can do this. I'm too tired. God help. God help. God help." **I was so exhausted.**

One day, when my second child was an infant, I couldn't get her to stop crying. Nothing I tried would get her to calm down. If I had not been so sleep deprived I probably could've handled it a little bit better. But in my exhaustion, I got to the point of imagining myself shaking or hitting my baby. That's a scary thing to remember. But it shows that **I was soooo overwhelmed.**

To overwhelmed and exhausted parents (including myself), I also want to say a second thing:

## **2- I'm not sorry.**

I'm sorry that I'm saying, "I'm not sorry." It could sound very insensitive. It's just that I've been learning that even though overwhelming EQUALS hard, overwhelming DOESN'T HAVE TO EQUAL bad. GOOD things can happen *because* we experience overwhelming situations. Here's what I mean:

### Story 1-

If you have a moment, read about Israel's situation in Exodus 14:1-12. It could be that, even though the people felt overwhelmed, God actually LIKED putting the Israelites between the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army. It gave Him a chance to put on a spectacular Red-Sea-Parting Show. He got to show the Israelites that He can smash their enemies. I'm sure He liked the celebratory praise He received after declaring to His people that he was a rescuing God. **We don't like enemy armies chasing us. We fear being destroyed. God doesn't mind them in our lives because it gives Him a chance to swallow them up for us.**

### Story 2-

It could be that Jesus LIKED falling asleep on a little boat out on the stormy sea with His disciples. His friends thought, "This is the end. We're gonna die!" The waves were overwhelming their vessel. But Jesus' Father got to watch excitedly as His son showed the world that even the waves and the wind must obey His command. **We don't like stormy waves. We fear drowning. God doesn't mind them in our lives because it gives Him a chance to still them with one word; convincing us again that safety isn't the absence of waves, it's the nearness of our proximity to the Master of the waves.**

**God likes what overwhelming situations do for us and for the sake of His glory.**

One of my favorite stories, that makes this point, is found in 2 Chronicles 20. It's the story of an Old Testament King with a really funny name: Jehoshaphat.

Story 3-

Just like the Israelites at the Red Sea, and just like Jesus' disciples in the storm, Jehoshaphat was overwhelmed. What was the cause of his alarm? Well, he was the leader of Judah and three nations decided to attack him. One translation of the biblical text says, "a great multitude" was coming against him. Talk about feeling overwhelmed! I think it's sort of funny that the NIV sums up his emotional response in one word: "Alarmed."

Jehoshaphat had more reasons to be alarmed than I (as a parent) have *ever* had. His people were about to be destroyed. And *he* was the leader. As soon as the news reached the ears of his subjects, they would be looking to *him* for answers. And who could ever have answers for a situation like this!?

Overwhelmed? Yes. Jehoshaphat was.

But God wasn't.

If you were to ask me what I think God felt about Jehoshaphat's situation, I would tell you at least two things. (And I think God feels things similar to these when WE find ourselves in overwhelming situations.)

I think God felt compassion and I think God felt confidence.

To help clarify what I mean by the word 'compassion' let me tell you what I DON'T think God felt.

**I don't think God felt disappointed with Jehoshaphat for finding himself in a situation of being overwhelmed.** I don't think God wished Judah would've had a better leader. I don't think God would've told Jehoshaphat, "Now look what you've gotten yourself into! If only you would've planned better for situations like these!! If only you would've had more wisdom! If only you would've amassed more resources!"

No.

That's not what God's message to overwhelmed people sounds like.

I think His message sounds more like: "I don't expect you to have all the resources. It's okay. I don't expect you to know what to do. I haven't made you to be a person that has all the



answers. If you feel pressure to be a person who knows exactly what to do *AND* have all the energy and resources to carry it out...well...that pressure is not coming from me.”

On a personal note, this is very good news for me because I tend to think that being a man means that I have to be strong. I tend to think that strong means:

- confident or NOT alarmed.
- well-resourced...NOT having “nowhere” to turn.
- “If you need answers, you can look to me,” ...not, “Yikes! I don’t have any answers. I don’t know what to do in this situation.”

I tend to think that if I were really a godly man, I’d know how to handle all of life’s tough situations.

But the story of God-and-Jehoshaphat gives us a different picture of what strength is. It gives us a different way to handle overwhelming situations. It shows us that God doesn’t define human strength to be the ability to rise above all (or at least most) of life’s challenging situations.

According to God’s feelings, as revealed in this passage, strength is...:

1. ...the ability to recognize our human state of being unable, incapable, in need.
2. ...in our need, to turn to capital “S” Strength. (aka “God”)
3. ...while our situation is still dire, to wait and stay in a place of neediness even though it feels very vulnerable and everything inside of us is screaming, “do everything possible to avoid situations like these!”
4. ...before God rescues us, to fight to hope in God; believing that He will do what he’s promised...that he will do what he’s done millions of times in the past: RESCUE.
5. ...to obey what God says to do, even though it might seem crazy.

Jehoshaphat must have known a lot about this kind of strength because, at least in this story, he gives us an inspiring example of what God thinks human strength should look like.

If you have a moment, read all of 2 Chronicles 20. If you don’t have a moment, here’s a list of how Jehoshaphat handled his overwhelming situation. I think it’s how God wants us to handle parenting’s overwhelming situations.

- He was alarmed (fearful/afraid). (vs. 3)
- He set himself to seek the Lord knowing that the Lord was his vital need. (vs. 3)
- He gathered his people. (vs. 4)
- He began **saying things that were true about God**. (vs. 6-9)
- He asked God to intervene. (vs. 12)
- He **acknowledged that he and his people were powerless to face the overwhelming situation**. (vs. 12) He said, “We don’t know what to do. But our eyes are on you.” (vs. 12)
- He and his people waited. (vs. 13)

- **God spoke to them with clear and practical details** of how to handle the overwhelming situation. (vs. 14-17)
- In response to God's practical help, he and his people worshipped. They praised God with a loud voice. (vs. 18, 19).
- What was once overwhelming became a place of abundant provision. (vs. 25)
- (For more, scan the qr code)



Here's what I get out of the story. God didn't EXPECT Jehoshaphat to be "Super-Jehoshaphat." Nor did God WANT Jehoshaphat to be "Super-Jehoshaphat." God liked Jehoshaphat's weakness and his lack of resources. In fact, he was at his best when he seemed to be weakest. God is okay with overwhelming circumstances because God, then, get's to be seen as "Super-God."

Wow. What a relief for parents like you and me!

### **God doesn't call us to be Super-Moms or Super-Dads.**

God doesn't expect you to do it all right. He doesn't expect you to get it ALL right *all* the time. Parenting *is* hard. And you can be okay with that knowing that *God* is okay with that. You can reject pressures that tell you you have to be a good, "Christian" parent that leads and raises kids perfectly.

**Sometimes those pressures will come from other people.** You might tend to feel, "I have to be a competent mom because my mommy-friends are competent." You might feel like you have to parent well so your mother-in-law will finally get the point that you 'know what you're doing.' You might tend to feel embarrassed or ashamed when your kids act up in public. You can reject those pressures. When they come, you don't have to act quickly. You can wait and say, like Jehoshaphat, "I don't know what to do but my eyes are on you." In seasons of particular difficulty, you can gather your people (spouse, friends, pastor). You can ask them to wait on the Lord so He can speak to you and tell you how to proceed.

### **Let the pressure of having to be competent fall off.**

God's aim for you isn't to be a competent parent. He DOES want to use you to bless your children. He DOES want you to lead your children well. But he DOESN'T want you to be the Competent One, Wise One, Have-All-The-Answers One. God hasn't designed parenting to be a stage where you and your skills shine. God has designed parenting (like the rest of life's experiences) to be a stage on which His competency shines; where His wisdom shines.

Just like Jehoshaphat when he was alarmed, **you aren't at your best (in parenting) when you have all the answers. You're at your best (in parenting) when you don't have the answers, YET you look to God, hope in God, wait for God, follow God and depend on God.**

Sometimes it's hard for us to live this way because we forget that God is a god who offers good news for life's toughest situations. It's easy to think that God is a god for Sunday mornings. It's easy to think that God is a god for worship songs. It's harder to believe that God is a god who offers practical help for middle-of-the-night infant feedings or when our child is throwing tantrums. It can be a faith-fight to reject the notion that God is distant and disconnected from our everyday struggles in life. We need to train our minds to believe that:

**God is someone that *real people* can turn to in the midst of *real problems*. And the help He offers is real and practical.**

We have to constantly remind ourselves that in the middle of the trenches of parenting, God doesn't leave us alone. In the middle of the confusion and messiness of it all, God stays close and He even teaches us. We have to be our own preacher and preach to ourselves that He will not leave us alone in the middle of something hard. We have to believe that verses like the ones below are NOT just for Sunday School:

- "God is our refuge and strength an ever present help in time of trouble." (New International Version, Ps. 46.1)
- "The Lord your God is with you. The Mighty Warrior who saves." (Zeph. 3.17)
- "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." (Isa. 43.1-3)

It's so important that I'll say it again:

**God is someone that *real people* can turn to in the midst of *real problems*. And the help He offers is real and practical.**

If parenting feels overwhelming, YOU'RE NOT ALONE. You're very NORMAL. Just because Facebook has lots of happy pictures of smiling people doesn't mean that everyone's life is easy. Behind the smiles are lots of tears, fights, meds, and anxiety.

God is okay with parenting being overwhelming. You can learn to be okay with that too.

**God allows overwhelming parenting moments NOT to remind you of how much of a failure you are.**

He doesn't make parenting overwhelming to challenge you to a losing battle.

One reason why there is an overwhelming side to parenting is so that your life can be a "stage"; a stage on which God shows the world that he still does, today, what he did for Jehoshaphat

and Judah, what he did for the Israelites at the Red Sea, and what he did for Jesus' disciples in their sinking boat.

As I said in the preface, this book was written to give overwhelmed parents HOPE. In this first chapter was the first message of hope. In fewer words, the message is this:

*“Parents: Are you overwhelmed? Take heart. With God, “Waves” don’t equal disaster and failure. With God, “Attacking armies” don’t equal hopelessness and defeat. When it’s God’s cues and script that you’re following, “waves” and “attacking armies” are what happens in the story right before a powerful revealing of His glory; which results in the joy of His people.”*

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I'm NOT a GOOD ENOUGH mom



A SHORT mediation FOR  
OVERWHELMED PARENTS



MOTHERHOOD IS FRICKIN' HARD



NO ROOM FOR COMPARISON



HOME RUN MOTHERING



PARENTING IS NEITHER  
HEAVEN NOR HELL



CELEBRATING THE VICTORIES



NEGATIVE OPINIONS WILL COME



LIFE DOES NOT EQUAL IDEALS



# - CHAPTER 2 -

## WHAT IS "RADIANCE PARENTING?"

If the name, "**Jehoshaphat**" (from Chapter 1) sums up this book's first message of hope to overwhelmed parents, the second message of hope could be summed up in the words, "**Radiance Parenting.**"

In the middle of my parenting mess, "Radiance Parenting" is a principle that God's teaching me, which...:

- ...is the most exciting thing that I've learned about parenting.
- ...is behind most of what I do and say with my children.
- ...is a source of energy when parenting gets exhausting.
- ...helps me feel that what I'm doing is valuable and important.
- ...influences the actions of my personal life.
- ...makes the 1,000 things I have to do only 1 thing I have to do.

### So...What is Radiance Parenting?

**Radiance Parenting is God showing children what He's like through their experiences of Mom and Dad in the everyday moments of life.**

The first time I can remember this concept influencing the way I interacted with a child was before I had kids. I was playing with my nieces in a park. Emma (5 years old at the time) got scared after she climbed 4 feet up a tree. It wasn't a huge deal. With a little coaching, she could've easily gotten back down herself. Before I chose to immediately lift her down or say, "Duh, Silly...just put your foot right here and then jump," I felt the impulse to pause. The pause allowed an everyday moment to become a very special moment for me. I felt like I should choose my words **as if it weren't me speaking to her but God**. I decided to say something like, "You don't have to be afraid when your Uncle Caleb is close by." My hope was that my words would point her to the following emotion-affecting principle: that when someone strong and big is with her, she's safe. Even though her circumstances might cause anxiety, she can quickly exchange her nervousness for a confidence because someone strong is available and desiring to use his strength for her protection.

Through Emma's encounter with me, I hoped that she got a little glimpse of what God is like. I gave her an experience that will have an admittedly small, but positive, effect on her concept of God. I used my words and actions to image God to her. I had a chance to give her a little, momentary glimpse of the role God is constantly playing in her life. Even though I knew she probably wasn't connecting her experience directly with God, it was special that I got to use an everyday moment to increase the chance (ever so slightly) that one day she'll know, believe and have her emotions affected by the reality that God is always strong and always available to help her in scary times.

Here's a different example of how the concept of Radiance Parenting helped me respond to that story (from chapter 1) of finding poop all over my daughter and her crib.

I heard her happily playing in bed. When I went to check on her, I smelled poop as soon as I opened the door. When I found poop on her, all I could say was, "Bethany!?" A ton of thoughts raced through my head all at once. "How am I even going to BEGIN cleaning up this mess?!" "Yuck! Where do I put my hands so that I can pick her up with the least chance of getting poop on myself?!"

In the middle of all of those thoughts (while I was saying: "Bethany!? Bethany, what did you do?!"), I realized that God might have plans to use this messy parenting moment to give her a picture of what He's like **through her interactions with me**. I started paying less attention to the poop and more attention to her eyes.

When I had first walked into the room she had a child's innocent smile on her face. She had even turned and stood up excitedly to greet me when she heard the door open. Her eyes were happy. They weren't defiant or mischievous. I'm guessing that she didn't even know she was a mess. However, everything about her happy eyes changed when she heard the the tone of voice I used to say, "Bethany!?" She immediately lowered her smiling eyes. She bent down and turned her face away. Her actions made me think that she was experiencing shame.

I'm glad God helped me to notice her eyes and not just the poop. It kept me from doing and saying things that would have encouraged further shame:

- "Sarah, LOOK AT WHAT BETHANY DID!?"
- "Bethany, I can't believe you did this! You're so dirty!"
- "No, Bethany! Bad girl! Don't play with your poop!"
- During the whole cleaning process she probably could've looked up at my eyes and seen disgust. My body language would've been communicating that I did not want to be close to her in her mess.

I'm so glad that God helped me pause before I did anything. Without His intervention, I would've rebuked her without teaching her. I would've been impatient; forgetting that her need was to be taught and not to be yelled at. Her experience of Dad would've made her conclude

that, “I have to look away from my dad’s eyes if he’s upset.” I wouldn’t have modeled the picture, found in Ezekiel 16, of how God interacts with messy people.

*“On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths. 5 No one looked on you with pity or had compassion enough to do any of these things for you. Rather, you were thrown out into the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised.*

*6 “Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, “Live!” 7 I made you grow like a plant of the field... 8 “Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your naked body. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine.*

*9 “I bathed you with water and washed the blood from you and put ointments on you. 10 I clothed you with an embroidered dress and put sandals of fine leather on you. I dressed you in fine linen and covered you with costly garments. 11 I adorned you with jewelry: I put bracelets on your arms and a necklace around your neck, 12 and I put a ring on your nose, earrings on your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. 13 So you were adorned with gold and silver; your clothes were of fine linen and costly fabric and embroidered cloth. Your food was honey, olive oil and the finest flour. You became very beautiful and rose to be a queen. 14 And your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, because the splendor I had given you made your beauty perfect, declares the Sovereign LORD.”*

(Ezek. 16.4-14)

With a God-given desire to model for Bethany the way that God interacts with His messy people, I decided that I needed to do three things:

**1- I needed to gently and clearly teach Bethany that the poop on her was dirty.** So, I got close to her. I touched her and turned her ashamed eyes back towards mine. I looked deep into her eyes and used a calm and serious tone to say, “Bethany, this is messy. You have poopies all over. It’s yucky.” My words and tone were effective in helping her know that she was filthy. She got sad. She realized that the messiness was not positive. She felt repentant. She said, “Sorry Daddy,” with a whimper in her voice.

**2- I needed to give her an almost spiritual experience of being cleaned by her dad.** I touched her. I used my hands to lift her out of the poopie crib. I put her in the empty bath tub and started using wipes to clean her off. My hands touched her filthiest, stinkiest places. Sometimes I would show her the poop on the wipe and in the same stern yet calm tone say, “Look how yucky. Look how messy.” I washed her with water. I used soap to cleanse her. I rinsed away all that was dirty until she was clean. It’s important to note that this was not a typical bath. She didn’t have toys. It wasn’t playful. We did not talk. I let the silence continue to reinforce what I was communicating to her in step #1. She knew she was filthy. I kept her



attention on experiencing my hands cleaning her and on my nearness to her in her mess. When she had been washed from head to toe, I wrapped her in a clean towel and held her close to me.

To help her realize that the dirtiness was behind her (in her past), I carried her out of the messy bath area into a new place. I laid her in the towel on the couch and put a clean diaper on her. While she was still laying down, I asked her to look at my eyes. I spent the next 30 seconds saying words like this: "Daddy cleaned you. You were messy. Daddy washed you. Daddy cleaned you all up. You are not messy anymore. You are all clean. Daddy washes you. Daddy cleans you. Daddy makes it all better. Daddy makes it all better. When you're messy, Daddy helps you. etc. etc." For the first time since I found her in her mess, I let my facial expression change. I let my eyes brighten. I made my smile big. I made sure that she knew that she was clean because of what I had done for her. I told her that what I did for her that night is what I will continually do for her in the future. My hope was that she would learn, through experiences like these, that when she's dirty, messy, stuck and in need Daddy comes to clean, rescue and restore. That's what God does for us.

**3- I needed to firmly, and lovingly, teach her that it is inappropriate to play with poop.** I spent 5-10 minutes explaining, in ways that she could understand, what our rules would be about playing with poop. I told her what her hands could touch and not touch. I told her what would happen if she disobeyed those instructions. She left that time feeling a seriousness about her dad's words and a love that came from his leadership.

When it was all done, she acted so different. Her eyes were not ashamed. She didn't feel a need to turn away from me. Instead, she held my neck close as I walked her back up the stairs to bed. (My wife, during all this, cleaned her bed and changed the sheets.) Bethany's heart was peaceful. She also gave indications that Daddy's rules about not having her hands in her diaper were serious. Her dad taught her, cleaned her, and got close to her in her mess. A very messy experience became a very spiritual experience.

I left her bedroom feeling thankful to have been in a poop cleaning situation. I wasn't even mad about my daughters mess interrupting my relaxing, movie-watching evening.

This is one example of how the concept of Radiance Parenting helps me feel like what I do as a parent is more than just cleaning poop. I give my children experiences with me that introduce them to the way God is.

### **Looking ahead to the rest of this book**

The rest of Part 1 of this book gives more examples of what Radiance Parenting is and why it's so important for a child's development. You don't have to read it if you don't want. It's good stuff, especially if you are into 1) the WHY behind a principle 2) the value of knowing God and 3) the implications of having an inaccurate concept of God.

Feel free, however, to skip to the practical stuff in Part 2. You'll find detailed and practical suggestions regarding how to implement the concept of Radiance Parenting at different stages of your child's pre-elementary school development. There will be practical suggestions for:

- infant care (page 72) including the 10 Point Sleep Test (page 83)
- feeding solid foods (page 91)
- how to help your child sleep through the night (page 86)
- helping your toddler respond to the sound of your voice (page 106)
- teaching your young toddler what to touch and not touch (page 112)
- how to lead your toddler well (page 115)
- and more

# - CHAPTER 3 -

## MORE ON 'WHAT IS RADIANCE PARENTING?'

I must have had 37 things loaded up in my arms. It was *way* past my children's bedtime. I exited the church building after teaching a class and my children were running towards me in the empty parking lot.

As you read the story of what happened, keep the following definition of Radiance Parenting in mind:

**Radiance Parenting is "I give my children experiences with me that introduce them to the way that God is."**

"Daddy!" they exclaimed. They were running towards me with huge smiles. Usually, when we have a greeting like this, I like to sit down on the ground (even if we're in a public place) and stretch my arms out towards them as they run to me. As they get closer, I say things like, "Girls! Girls! I love my girls! I'm so happy to see you! I love it when you run to me!" Then they plunge into my chest and arms and I let myself fall backwards and receive them with kisses, hugs, laughs, squeezes and tickles.

On this particular night, however, squeezes and tickles weren't on my mind. On my mind was, "Wow. It's late. We have to get these girls home and in bed." My arms were full of things I had just used to teach a class. I had a guitar, iPod speakers, a laptop slung over my shoulders, another bag full of session handouts and rough-draft-copies of this book. If I recall correctly, that may have even been the night that I brought in a sleeping bag and mat as a joke (because the name of the class was "For Parents Who Have Ever Been Exhausted & Overwhelmed") So as I saw my girls running towards me, my **first reaction** was to hurriedly walk past them so I could dump my things into the trunk and zoom them home to bed.

(Side note: I put the words "**first reaction**" (from the previous sentence) in bold because Radiance Parenting is a lot about:

- "**pausing** particularly in moments that are stressful for you or them."
- "**pausing**" so that you can ask yourself the question, "If God were with my child right now, what response would he give him/her in this situation?")

- **“pausing”** so that your children don’t get a “natural” or **“first reaction”** from Mom/Dad but a “spiritual” interaction that models for the child what God would say/do/think/feel/...or what God’s facial expression would look like.)

I’m not always good at “pausing,” but that night in the parking lot, God helped me to not give them my “first reaction.” He helped me think, “what impression will my girls get of their heavenly Father if their earthly Dad meets their happy, excited, love-motivated, “Ready-To-Tackle-Daddy” greeting with a less warm, rather cold, thoughtless, agenda-motivated, “brush-them-off-and-dump-stuff-into-the-trunk” greeting?” I also thought, “how can I avoid giving consistent impressions that God isn’t open-armed and excited when human beings turn their attention to Him or approach Him?”

With God’s help, I used that very normal moment to give my children a spiritual interaction. I decided to be less preoccupied with getting things in the trunk and more concerned with being the arms and face and hug of God to them. I wanted the words that I used to sound as much as possible like the words God would speak to them if they were running to greet Him instead of me.

So here’s what I did. I put all of my things on the parking lot floor. (It wasn’t a high traffic area by the way. \*smile\* It was very safe.) I took all of the bags and straps off of my shoulders and left all my teaching items scattered to the side. I let my eyes gaze at them as they ran to me to show them that I noticed them. I made my face smile bigger and bigger as they approached so that they knew how happy I was to see them and to receive their warm greeting. I said excited words like, “Oh yeeESSSS!” and, “MY GIRLS!” The tone of my voice was declaring to them that I loved their company; that I drop/ditch/shelf things that could otherwise be occupying my attention to receive their movements towards me with warmth and excitement. I let them tackle me when they got to me. It was only after we exchanged a few happy words, that I turned away to pick up my things and tell them what was on my mind. I told them that over the next 20 minutes our goal would be to get home fast so we could get them in bed since it was way past their bedtime.

That’s it. It’s actually pretty simple.

A “Radiance Parent” is excited to focus or target everything they do in order to bear witness to what God is like. They are able to realize things like:

- “What I say (and the way I say it) paints a picture of God for my children.”
- “How I respond when my child throws a tantrum paints a picture of God for them.”
- “My hugs can actually reveal God’s nature to them.”
- “Even when I feed, clean and clothe my children, I am giving them a chance to feel what it’s like to be provided for by a caring and close God.”
- “How much time I take to know my kids, and be involved with them, paints a picture of God.”

- “I’m not just Mom or Dad to my kids. I’m most of what will shape the view they’ll have of God when they grow older.”
- etc.

**I’m realizing that there are SO MANY opportunities to bear witness to what God is like in the middle of day to day life with children.**

I just had another “Radiance Parenting” opportunity 15 minutes ago as I was writing the preceding paragraphs. My oldest daughter (Ava) was downstairs sitting patiently while her mom practiced french-braiding her hair. Ava always likes it when she sees other girls with french-braided hair. I think her mom made her like it so much because she would regularly say things like, “Wow Ava! Look at your friend Bristol’s hair. Her mom put it in a french braid. I wish I could do that to your hair, Ava. It looks so nice, doesn’t it?”

Well I didn’t know that the french-braiding was happening. I wasn’t prepared for what was about to happen. I was just upstairs typing away while our 2 year old was taking a nap. All of the sudden, Ava loudly and excitedly busted through my door to show me the finished updo. (Apparently her mom sent her up to show me.) Ava said (in a NOT so quiet, “aware-of-my-sleeping-sister” voice), “Preeeesenting....MY HAIR! It’s in a french braid! Mommy braided it for me!” Her eyes were beaming with delight. She was so excited to show her pretty hair to her daddy.

Before Ava said the part about her hair being in a braid, my “**first reaction**” was: “SHHHH.” But as soon as I realized why she was thinking less about her napping sister and more about her exciting news, I quickly “**paused**” and thought, “I need to ditch my “**first reaction**” and change into “**spiritual reaction**” mode. Rather than keeping my eyes glued to my writing project...rather than tell her something like, “Be quiet! Your sister is sleeping!” I need to give her a spiritual experience. I want to give her an experience of what God would do/say if she approached him with something she really cared about.”

So I stopped saying, “Shhhh” and smiled. I purposely made my eyes look at her sweetly. In a quieter, more hushed, tone (which I did on purpose to let her know my voice was in “your-sister’s-napping” mode) I said, “Ohhh! Wonderful! I really like your hair!” After I said that she smiled and stared right into my eyes. For a few moments I didn’t say anything. She just kept staring into my eyes. She wasn’t ready for the interaction to be done. So I asked her questions about it; giving her a chance to verbalize her excitement. I interacted with her by saying, “Did it take a long time?” “Did it hurt?” “What do you think? etc. Finally I thanked her for coming upstairs to show me.

God loves to help parents and their children have Radiance Parenting moments. I like to imagine that God says the following to my children, “I want to introduce myself to you. I want to show you the glory of who I am. And the way I’ll do it is by letting you be with your mom and dad in the everyday moments of life.”

## How Radiance Parenting is affecting my children.

It's been interesting to see how this "Radiance Parenting" approach has affected my children's...

- ...emotional lives.
- ...what they do and don't do.
- ...what they believe about God.
- ...and what they say about God.

I'll will only give two examples of this now, but feel free to check out more examples on our blog: [www.SoMuchHope.com/parenting](http://www.SoMuchHope.com/parenting)

My dad, Nathan Howard, recently told the following story of my daughter Ava and her younger sister Bethany in one of his sermons. Below you'll find a portion of the transcript:

"Back around Christmas my wife (who to them is "Nana") took them to the mall. My oldest granddaughter, Ava Grace, (she's 4) said, "you know, Nana, they have a Santa here and you can take your picture with Santa." And Sharon said, "Yeah...but we know that Christmas really isn't about Santa." Ava said, "Oh yes, I know that Christmas is about Jesus and Jesus being born." (She's 4 years old) "But there's nothing wrong with celebrating something about Santa...getting pictures taken with Santa. That wouldn't be a *wrong* thing, right?" And Nana said, "Well, yeah, but it costs money. They charge you for that and I..." So anyway Sharon took them over to see how much it would cost to get a picture with Santa. But it was like 20 some bucks! Is that crazy or what!? So immediately, if you know my wife, that's *not* gonna happen. So Nana says, "Honey, so...yeah...we're not gonna take a picture."

But the workers (Santa's helpers) kind of saw this conversation going on...and there was nobody [in line]...it was the middle of the day...so they said, "You know...well...nobody is here. Why don't you just go up and sit on Santa's lap. We don't have to take your picture. You don't have to pay any money." And so Sharon said, "Yeah, that would be fine." So Bethie got up on Santa's lap and I really don't know what Bethie said. But when Santa turned to Ava Grace and said, "So...what would you like Santa to bring you for Christmas?" This was her answer: (I'm almost quoting.) She said, "**Well, I'm gonna let my Daddy decide that because my Daddy knows what will be best for me.**" They (the workers) all sort of...like...looked at



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each other thinking, “wait...is there something...like...wrong with this child!? Like we have never...we’ve *never* heard anything like that.”

You will live in freedom. You will live well if you have absolute trust in a God who loves you, takes care of you, and knows what’s best. In the world that we live in there’s only one way to have a sense of peace. ...and it’s all about control. You can feel that your peace will come when YOU’RE in control. (By the way...how’s that going for you?) Or (you can feel at real peace) when you know the One who is in control and (when you) know He’s good. And then you’ll say, “My Daddy knows what’s best. He’ll give me what I need.”

Did you catch the main point of the story? **Ava told Santa Claus that she can relax and be peaceful about Christmas presents because she’s confident that her dad knows what’s best for her!**

I included this story here to give you an example of how a Radiance Parent approach can have a noticeably positive impact on what a child does/doesn’t do and on their emotional lives. Ava isn’t perfect. (Remember the first few paragraphs of chapter 1?) Furthermore, Ava’s statement to Santa Claus didn’t say anything directly about God. However, it’s confident statements and beliefs like these (about her earthly father’s character) that will make a future confidence in her heavenly Father’s character more likely.

Here’s another example of how our intention to be “Radiance Parents” is affecting our children.

I recently got out the video camera and decided to spontaneously ask Ava some questions about God. I was curious to find out what she would say in response. You can watch the full conversation on video by scanning here and/or read short portions of it below.



(Side note: We don’t talk much about questions like these. So she wasn’t so “practiced” at answering the questions. However, even though her answers are short and lack confidence, they give indications that she believes...:

- ...God is happy.
- ...God wants to be with her.
- ...God will be excited to see her in heaven and she will be excited to see him.

(I'm particularly excited that she's developing these beliefs about God because, sadly, I've encountered plenty of Christians that live their lives as if God is angry, distant and threatening them with hell if they don't improve their lifestyle.)

Here's the conversation:

Daddy: *Okay. What do you think God is like?*

Ava: *He's wonderful.*

Daddy: *So if you got to see God...what do you think He would do...if He saw you and you saw Him?*

*(Ava smiles because she remembers conversations we've had in the past where she imagines going to heaven and when she see's God she will run to Him and He will pick her up and smile and laugh and tickle her and love to be with her.)*

Ava: *Hug me.*

Daddy: *What else would God do if God saw you and you saw Him?*

Ava: *uhhh. play with me. (Pause.) Play with me.*

Daddy: *What would God feel inside when He saw you?*

Ava: *uhh. ummm Wonderful. Or happy or something?*

Daddy: ***What are you gonna do when you see God?***

Ava: ***Uh. (Big smile.) Hug Him. (Excited smile.) And run to Him. And jump in His arms. Hehehe. Yayaya.***

Daddy: ***How much time do you think you'll spend with God when you see Him?***

Ava: ***Forever. (smile)***

Daddy: ***How do you think you will feel when you see God?***

Ava: ***Hahaha (joyful chuckle) Happy.***

Daddy: *Ava you're right. I'm just gonna tell you the things that are right. When you talk God listens to you and loves it. And God loves your voice. And when you ask Him, "God could you please...I'm gonna be quiet, could you please talk to me?" ...He loves it. He loves it when you...you give Him space to talk. He loves your voice. And you're right...when you see Him He is going to run to you and you are going to run to Him and there is going to be soo much excitement as you HUG each other. (Daddy squeezes Ava and Ava squeals with a smile.) Hug so tight. (Ava squeals, "Daddy!") It will be like laughing. He'll say, "I can't wait to see you and now I got to see you and be with you!!!" ...right?*

Ava: *Yeah.*



Daddy: *That's what God is going to be like. (Camera zooms in.) I love you sweetie.*

Ava: *Love you.*

My wife and I are realizing that these beliefs about God aren't primarily being shaped by Bible study times or by family devotions or formal teaching times. (Although those times are very important!) These feelings about God are being developed through our children's encounters/experiences with the way that we are in the everyday moments of life.

Changing diapers. Getting poop on our fingers. Bath times. Good night hugs. Tantrums. Meal times. Playing dolls house or throwing a ball. Midnight feedings for Baby. Car rides.

These are the "everyday moments" of life. And they are moments when our children get impressions of what God is like as they interact with the way that we are like.

Here's a recap of what we're saying in fancier language:

**A Radiance Parent realizes that a child's functional theology is heavily influenced by their experiences of Mom and Dad during the everyday moments of life.**

**A Radiance Parent realizes that a child receives lots of information about God (accurate or not) through their experiences of Mom and Dad during the everyday moments of life.**

These sentences have huge implications that radically affect the way that I parent.

**Implication #1-The "everyday moments" of life with my kids ARE important.**

I don't know about you, but it's not very natural for me to believe the above statement. The first thing that comes to mind when I hear my child crying as they wake up too early from a nap ISN'T, "This "everyday moment" is very important." Instead, usually the phrase in my head goes something like:

- "These 'everyday moments' are SO exhausting."
- "I don't think I have the energy for another one of these 'everyday moments.'"
- "Why are my kids so needy ALL THE TIME?"
- "I can't wait until today's 'everyday moments' are done so that I can finally take a shower or finally sit down for a moment."

Sometimes the poop, screaming, endless energy, whining, authority battles, diaper changes, bath times can really take their toll on my energy level. My kids' needs are so constant that I can easily get depressed. The energy they require is greater than the energy I feel like I have available to give. However, SOMETHING CHANGES when I realize that God wants to introduce Himself to my children in the middle of these types of moments. God wants my children to experience His beauty. And **here's what's nearly unbelievable: the channel of His beauty is me!** God wants my children to experience His strength and love. And the

channel of His strength and love is me! It's me and my leadership in the middle of their seemingly unending, everyday needs! God wants them to experience the healing, soothing, comforting effect of His emotions. And the channel of His holy emotions is me!

Sometimes I wish that my children weren't so needy. Sometimes I wish that my wife would handle all of the diapers and feeding times. But, I don't wish for those things when I realize that God wants my children to know what He's like IN THOSE TIMES through encountering me.

### **Implication #2- The way that I am, in the everyday moments of life, IS important.**

Children will draw conclusions about God, self and life by watching me whether I'm ready for it or not!

The attitude I have when I change my child's diaper MATTERS. My body language throughout the day with my toddler MATTERS. The words I use when I'm angry or impatient MATTERS. What my attention is given to when my child is with me MATTERS. What I let my family do and not do when we're together MATTERS. How I treat my spouse MATTERS. What I say and don't say about God MATTERS. I'm the biggest source of information that my non-Bible-reading, non-invisible-God-experiencing children have regarding what God is like.

### **Concluding the chapter**

This is good news for me! I am more than a needs-meeter. I am a God-introducer.



Through encounters with me (knowing, feeling, hearing me) my children can grow to have a **healthy concept of God.**

### **A healthy concept of God**

I repeated and bolded those words because a child's concept of God is a BIG DEAL. It affects EVERYTHING! And...that is the focus of chapter 4.

# - CHAPTER 4 -

## 'CONCEPT OF GOD': THE BASICS

We are GOOD at shaking our hips. And although Ava, Bethany and Sarah might tell you differently, I (and only I!) am the hands-down-BEST hip-shaker in our family! You'll agree if you scan the qr code.



There's one song that my family and I especially like shaking our hips to. It's a song from the early '80s written by Michael W. Smith. You'll find it entitled on the album as "Race Is On," but we call it, "COME ON AND GO, GO, GO!!!" Play the song for yourself! I DARE YOU! I doubt that you will be able to resist shaking your hips to the beat throughout the whole first 30 seconds. Shut the shades or else your neighbors will think you're weird because, once that intro is done, you'll just HAVE to start running back and forth through the living room.

That, at least, is what we do in *our* house.

This summer, after breakfast times, we've gotten into a routine of putting on upbeat praise songs while we 1) clear the table 2) do some morning exercises and 3) dance. Usually, after about 15 minutes of this, I wrap up our time by picking a slow song and telling my daughters to sit with me in our giant papasan chair. It's been very meaningful for me to sing songs about God while holding my daughters in my arms.

The other day we listened to a Matt Gilman song that says:

"You made a way for me to enter the Holy Place."

I was having a wonderful time singing along, when I realized that my daughters (ages 2 and 4) had no clue what the Holy Place was nor why I was enthusiastically singing that Jesus made a way for me to enter it. I decided to attempt explaining it even though I wasn't sure that I could make the teaching understandable.

I stood them up and we walked to the edge of the living room. I told them to pretend that God was in there and that people could only be with Him if they could get inside. If people were NOT in the living room they could NOT be with God. I invited them to enter. Spinning a circle, with a huge smile on my face, I said, "This is what Adam and Eve got to do in the Garden of Eden! They got to be WITH God. They could hear God's voice and see God and it was THE BEST. They LOVED being with God. But when they disobeyed God, they had to go away." I told my daughters to leave the living room. I pushed them out and said, "Adam and Eve had to leave the place where God was. They could not be with Him anymore and it was so sad. It's sad because being with God is the best. It's the happiest place and they had to GO AWAY. And God put an angel, holding a sword, in front of the garden and the angel said, "You cannot come back to God. You have done the wrong thing and you can NOT COME BACK TO GOD. Oh Adam and Eve were so sad."

To keep my daughters out of the living room, and to create a sense of separation from God, I lined up a row of chairs at it's edge. I continued to teach them saying, "It was the same with God's people called the Israelites. They could not be with God or talk to God. They had to stay away. The Israelites didn't have an angel in the way. They had a big, huge curtain in the way (and I put blankets over the chairs representing the curtain). God let only one person come in but he could not come in very much. He could only come in once a year to the place where God was. The Israelites called it the Most Holy Place. No one could come in except for one person, once a year. And God only let him come in if he had, with him, the blood of animals that had been killed. The man would come in and say, 'God we are sorry for disobeying. Please forgive us. Here is the blood of animals that did nothing wrong so that you can forgive us.' And then he had to leave God and go outside of the curtain. It was very sad. The people could not be with God. Even if they had the blood of animals, the rest of the people could not go past the curtain."

I had a very sad expression on my face. As my daughters watched me I said, "The people could not sing the song we were singing this morning. They could not sing, 'You made a way for me to enter the Holy Place.' They could not be with God. It was very sad. Adam and Eve had a big angel telling them that they could not go back to God and the Israelites had a big curtain telling them that they could not go back to God."

So why can WE sing the song? Why can WE sing that there's a way to enter the Holy Place? How can WE go to the place where God is if an angel blocked Adam and Eve and a curtain blocked the Israelites?

Well remember how we talk about Jesus dying on the cross and that amazing things happened for us when He died? When Jesus died something very amazing happened in the Most Holy Place. See these chairs with the curtain on top of them? When Jesus died, and shared His blood with us, the CURTAIN WAS RIPPED APART.” (And I pulled apart the blankets and moved back the chairs that had been blocking the way in to the living room.) “JESUS WAS ABLE TO MAKE A WAY. HE TOOK THE CURTAIN AWAY! He broke the curtain that told the people they could not go back to God. Jesus made a way for people to be able to be where God is. We don’t have to be far away anymore! We don’t have to be sad anymore! We can be happy because we can be with God. And we can RUN to God. If we ask Jesus to share His blood with us, we can run to God and He can hold us and pick us up and say to us, ‘I’m so glad that you are with me!’” (And I celebrated. I let them into the living room and picked them up. I kept repeating over them things that God would say to them if they ran to Him.) I said, “I love to be with you! I’m so glad you’re with me! It’s happy when you are with me! You are safe when you are close to me!”

My oldest daughter had a beaming smile on her face. She had been listening attentively and would even hop up and down when the story got exciting. She went back out past the chairs and said, “Daddy, Daddy pretend you’re God and pretend I come to you.” She stood at the chairs and said, “Can I come in to be with you, God?” And I said, “Do you have Jesus’ blood shared with you? Did you ask Jesus to share His blood with you so that you could be clean and be ‘passed over’, like when the destroying angel passed over the houses that had blood on the door before the Israelites left Egypt?” And she rightly said, “YES!” And I said, “Well then YES! You can come in and be with me! We can be with each other.” I picked her up and spun her around and kissed her. I said, “We will be together forever! And I love when you run to me! I’m so happy when I get to see you! You are so special to me!”

I’m very thankful for that time because it was a chance that the Holy Spirit gave me to shape my daughter’s concept of God. I’m not a trained theologian, but I think I can safely say that a person’s concept of God is VERY important.

A concept of God (at least the way I think of it) can be the mental picture that a person has of who God is and what He’s like. It can also include what God does, prefers, values, allows etc. If you take time to answer the following questions you’ll begin to explore what your own concept of God is:

- Where is God?
- What does God look like?
- Who does God look like?
- If God had favorite things, what would they be?
- Does God have least favorite things?
- Does God have a name?
- What is God’s name?
- Who is God with?
- Who is God not with?

- What does God think about?
- How old is God?
- What has God done?
- What will God do?
- Why does God do what He does?
- When does God do what He does?
- What does God think about me?
- What does God think about my sister?
- What does God think about the world?
- What does God think about death?
- What does God feel?
- What does God not feel?
- Does God feel?
- Why do some people like God and some people not like God?
- Should I like God? Why or why not?
- What does God do when I pray?
- *Side note: When your children are 4+ years old, it would be good to regularly talk about these questions. Repeat conversations about these questions at different stages of their childhood. See how their understanding of God changes. Find out what their perceptions of God are. Share stories from your life that have shaped the way you answer these questions.*

Whatever answers an individual gives, to these types of questions, reveals their concept of God. You could also say that it is their functional theology. Keep in mind that a person's theology and their *functional theology* can be different. A person's THEOLOGY can be what they SAY is true about God. A person's FUNCTIONAL THEOLOGY is what they *really* believe about God as revealed through their actions, values, emotions, priorities, schedule and spending habits. (For example a person may SAY, "I believe God always provides," but consistently experience a crippling fear that they will lose their job and not have enough money to provide for their family. Here's another example: a person may SAY, "God created me in His image and I am wonderfully made," but live with a debilitating hopelessness that no one will ever find them worthy of love.)

In this book when I say 'concept of God' I mean a person's functional theology: what their life, in the everyday moments, reveals about their belief of who God is and what He does.

### **So why is having an accurate concept of God so important?**

I can't speak as an educated theologian. But answering from my personal experience, I can say a person's concept of God (or lack of an accurate concept of God) affects a lot about their life. I've experienced that it determines things like:

- level of happiness
- level of fear and anxiety during stressful times

- how a person responds emotionally to life's challenges
- a person's habits
- how a person relates to the people in their life and the people that aren't in their life
- personality traits
- how a person responds to love
- whether or not a person is driven
- issues of shyness vs. confidence
- a person's priorities
- how a person spends their time and money
- etc

I don't think it's an overstatement to say that ***a person's concept of God (or lack of one) affects everything about their life and the way it's lived.***

The rest of this chapter contains examples (4 of which are personal examples) of how a concept of God affects everything. If you don't need the examples/illustrations, feel free to skip to the last three sentences of this chapter (on page 38)

Here are a few examples, from my own life, about how my concept of God has affected me in different everyday moments or experiences.

**Example 1 - My concept of God affects my emotions at 'Wake-Up-Time'.**

I'm 32 years old. I wake up at 7am feeling tired. I know my children will be up soon. I wish I could sleep more. I don't feel like I have the energy to get up and take care of them. I don't want to go into work.

I take a deep breath.

I've felt this sense of exhaustion before. I feel it almost every morning, actually. So I've trained myself to let the feeling of exhaustion remind me of some things that I know are true about God:

- God is with me.
- He strengthens me.
- He equips me to do the things He's called me to do.
- God isn't tired.
- He gives strength to the weary. He increases the power of the weak.
- God has made me a dad.
- God feels that dads are very important.
- God has placed me in my children's lives to point them to Himself. God is most important. It's very important for me to teach and show my children what God is like.

My concept of God positively influences the conclusions I make about my day, even though I've woken up tired. I realize that the day is full of important things and that I have a God who empowers me to do what He's invited me to do. I call out to God and He provides things that

change even the energy level that I experience. I get out of bed feeling strength to be a dad to these kids God has placed in my life.

In 'Example 1' my concept of God determines whether I wake up hopeful or depressed. If my family gets a dad that wakes up hopeful, I'll do my dad-job well and they'll be blessed as I radiate truth about what God is like. If I wake up not realizing truth about God, I'll tend to feel depressed about the day. My family may get hurt as I fail to do my dad-job well. They will probably feel misprioritized. They'll hear grumpy words and observe sulking actions. They might grow bitter as I make impatient comments to them or set nonrelational, and stressfully high, performance standards in an attempt to avoid being annoyed by their 'petty' needs. (i.e. "Can't you do that by yourself?" "Why is everyone being so loud?" "I have things to do. Go ask your mom.")

**Example 2 - My concept of God (or lack of one) affects a situation at work.**

I'm a teacher at an elementary school. Supervisors can come into the classroom unannounced and conduct performance evaluations. I hate performance evaluations. I feel like I'm a failure unless I receive distinguished marks in every category.

I hear from co-workers that my supervisor has been doing a lot of performance evaluations this week. I'm getting nervous thinking that, any day, it will be my turn. My supervisor comes at the most inopportune time. She asks if now is a good time to observe my lesson. I smile and nod but on the inside I'm wishing that she'd never have to come. My nervousness saps the 'life' out of my teaching. Typically I try to care about the students. Right now all I care about is getting good performance marks. I suddenly notice every instance of tiny, off-task student behavior. Each out-of-form moment seems to be screaming at me, "your students are NOT under control and it's YOUR fault."

I don't act very gracious, or loving, to the off-task students (even though they aren't really doing anything too wrong). I give them the 'teacher look' and hope that they straighten up before my supervisor takes points off. Inside, I'm angry at the kids for ruining my chances of receiving an A plus plus plus plus as a teacher. I wish my supervisor thought that I was the most outstanding teacher she's ever heard of. Not once during the evaluation do I think about God (besides whispering the prayer: "God help me do good!") Unfortunately, I'm not mindful of things I've learned about God regarding His unconditional love for me that can settle me even in the most nerve-wracking of situations.

After the students leave, my supervisor asks me about my plans and record keeping. I exaggerate their thoroughness. I definitely avoid mentioning areas of my teaching that obviously need improvement. After my meeting, I feel worried about the marks I'll receive. When I receive mediocre scores I'm bothered about it for days afterwards. Sometimes my body even evidences my obsessiveness. My face sometimes feels flushed and my body temperature seems to increase at different moments. These are definitely signs that I'm caring way too much about how one of my evaluations goes.



In 'Example 2' my concept of God affects whether I'm peaceful or not about performance evaluations. If I'm peaceful:

- I forego a lot of emotional stress that can even affect me physically (tension headaches, tiredness).
- I bless my students with a Spirit-filled teacher who patiently shepherds them through the course of the class.
- I move towards students with gentle firmness rather than angry orders.

If I'm stressed about performance evaluations:

- I lash out at my students.
- My stress level goes way up.
- I'm tempted to be dishonest with my supervisor.
- After work I return home self-focused, angry and defensive (which doesn't make for a very nice family dinner environment).

### **Example 3 - My concept of God affects what I do at the end of the day.**

Being a dad is pretty tiring. I don't feel like doing much at the end of the day. My wife just got an iPhone. Candy crush is pretty addicting. Maybe I'll spend some time trying to advance through the levels. I've played for a while already. I should probably spend some time reading the Bible or praying. Maybe I'll play Candy Crush for a bit longer. I end up playing Candy Crush longer than I should've. When I'm done I'm too tired to open the Bible. I feel guilty because I haven't spent very much time hearing from God over the last weeks. Let's be more realistic: I haven't heard from God very much over the last MONTHS. I get afraid wondering if I will be able to wake up, the next day, with the energy and perspective that I need in order to be a good dad. I probably won't be able to be a good dad if I don't read the Bible consistently. God will probably punish me by not equipping me to be a good dad since I haven't done a good enough job hearing His voice. I'm too tired to keep thinking about these things. I whisper a prayer, "God help me," and call it a night."

In 'Example 3' my concept of God affects whether I turn to God in my tiredness or not. If I turn to God:

- I draw upon a fountain of strength and grace.
- My emotions and mindset are reoriented around the truth that God is with me and that He empowers me to do all He's commanded.
- I hear God's voice regarding how proud He is of me. He encourages me with a reminder that I'm giving myself for His kingdom in the everyday moments of life.
- I am re-energized by His love.

If I don't turn to God in my tiredness:

- I can start disconnecting from my source of life.
- I can be like a branch that dries up and becomes ineffective and fruitless. (John 15)

- In my tiredness I might start looking to things that will comfort me. (A very dangerous reality for men. Side note: men, many times if your motivation for doing something is to comfort, protect or exalt yourself, you'll hurt people that are under your authority. Sometimes you'll hurt them without even realizing that you're harming them. When you are feeling tired and decide that you want to do something, ask yourself, "Why am I doing this?" If it's not for the good or benefit of someone else, proceed with caution. If you're excessively prioritizing yourself over the good or benefit of others, don't proceed.)
- My mental space and energy gets overtaken and I can no longer effectively hear from God regarding life and how He wants me to navigate through it.

**Example 4 - My wife's concept of God affects how she prepares for a social gathering and what she does when another woman walks into that gathering** *(written by Sarah)*.

I've realized that when I get ready to spend time with other people, subconsciously, I am often not feeling very peaceful. And I say 'subconsciously' because I don't normally realize what I'm feeling on the inside. But when I slow down to inspect my actions, it's pretty obvious that I'm not peaceful, or settled, inside. I might try on 3 or 4 different outfits. I've worn all these outfits before; they were fine last time. But for some reason, they're not fitting me right. I'm not satisfied with them, so I have to try on another until I find something that feels 'good enough.' Then I spend a decent amount of time fussing over my hair and jewelry. And when I get in the car, I might put on my lip gloss a few times before I get where I'm going and keep peeking sideways out that little mirror on the side of the car to check out my appearance.

When I look at my actions while I was getting ready to be somewhere, I realize that there's more going on inside of me than I care to admit. It's like there's this Standard of Beauty that I'm trying to live up to...and it's somewhat stressful to try to be 'good enough' to reach it.

When we get wherever we're going, you can continue to observe the unsettled-ness inside of me as I interact with other women. I feel threatened when another woman enters the room if she seems like she's attaining that Standard of Beauty better than I am. I'll start to feel jealous, or competitive, or intimidated. If I have to talk to that woman, the conversation will usually be characterized by fake-looking smiles, and yucky exchanges like, "I wish I had hair like yours," or "I could never pull off that dress like you do," or "You don't look like you ever carried a baby!" Yuck, yuck, yuck. Those types of conversations feel normal to me because that's what I've always experienced in the world of women. But it's so NOT SETTLED and NOT PEACEFUL. It's like a never-ending analyzation of myself and everyone else.

So as I've realized that, subconsciously, I tend to be anxious and striving about my appearance and the way that I am, I've also learned a concept of God that re-sets my perspective on what is 'good enough,' the way I am, and the way God is. When I train my mind to think these things, it's like I'm taking a deep breath instead of being suffocated:

- God is the one who MADE women and MADE beauty. His idea of what is beautiful and what isn't is RIGHT. Mine (given to me by the world) ISN'T RIGHT. I'm confused about what is beautiful. I need God to tell me what beauty is and isn't.

- God is the *most* beautiful. He made beautiful things because *He* is beautiful.
- He made women TO BE BEAUTIFUL. Whether I feel it or not, God made me, and He made me a woman, so THEREFORE, I AM beautiful.
- I don't need to add anything to myself in order to be beautiful. I just am. It's like birds. They just *know* how to fly. They just do it. They don't have to strive. That's what beauty is like for women. I just *am* beautiful.
- God has a plan for WHY He made women to be beautiful...and it's not to strive to be 'the best' because I'm so beautiful. He wants to give the world a picture of what HE is like.
- Real beauty doesn't strive or compete. Real beauty offers a safe place. It's welcoming. It's restful.

If I'm able to embrace this concept of God, then...:

- ...I'll walk into the social gathering with a restful heart.
- ...I'll have *space* in my mind to think about people and ask the Holy Spirit what *His* thoughts are for the people I encounter.
- ...I'll be able to hear His voice and be used by Him to minister His heart in the situations I experiences....instead of competing with other women. I'll be able to be welcoming and safe.

If I'm NOT able to embrace this concept of God, then...:

- ...I'll be thinking about myself throughout the whole gathering.
- ...I'll overly self-focus, asking myself questions like, "How do I look compared to these women?" or "Am I saying things that will make people like me or judge me?"
- ...My attention to myself will keep me from thinking about other people's emotional and spiritual needs.
- ...My preoccupation with Self will hurt others and hinder the work that the Holy Spirit wants to do through me. Even phrases that sound caring will be spoken with a motivation of self-advancement/preservation.

We're only taking the space to write down 4 instances of how our concept of God affects the way they respond in everyday situations. However, we COULD write many, many, MANY more because it's happening all the time. Need more convincing? Just skim through the list below:

I functionally believe that God is...	I am...
...my leader.	...able to make hopeful conclusions about what's happening in life. Good, and not disaster, is around life's next corner.
...close.	...I can pray with hope knowing God hears me even when it feels like He's distant.

...the perfect creator.	...able to like myself. I realize that God made me the way I am on purpose. He doesn't make mistakes. I am able to be confident in relationships with other people, even if what they say can be threatening.
...wise.	...in the habit of asking God His opinion before I do things. I want Him to coach me regarding how to feel about life's situations.
...my protector.	...free of having to strategize in order to avoid being hurt in relationships. ...not in the habit of freaking out about being robbed, raped, assaulted, etc.
...provider.	...able to study the family budget or financial records without freaking out. ...able to think about retirement and kids' college expenses without having a nervous breakdown. ...free of unhealthy stress regarding job security. ...generally peaceful because I know my needs will be provided for regardless of what the checking account statement says. ...taken care of.
...good.	...able to release control of my future. I know God has the best in mind for me. ...able to be hopeful about my present circumstances. God is doing something good right now, even though I'm not sure what it is. ...able to not be resentful about my past. God was there with me through everything I was going through. He wasn't letting ultimate harm come to my life.
...present. ...with me.	...not afraid of darkness, being alone, sickness, being robbed...etc. ...able to face (not avoid) challenging situations (i.e. talking to a boss, talking with my neighbor about a disagreement) ...able to not freak out on the first day of something new (like new job, school, neighborhood). ...able to hold onto a sense of peace when I navigate through a situation that I don't know how to handle.
...forgiving because of Christ.	...able to admit when I do wrong and ask for forgiveness. ...very much able to extend grace to others who have hurt or disappointed me. ...not carrying a load of shame because of my failures. I can approach God in prayer and feel like He accepts me. ...able to realize I am sinful AND loved by God.
...treating me as an adopted child because Jesus provided for my	...calm even if others disagree with me or disapprove of my actions. ...not dependent on my career performance to feel good about myself.

inclusion into God's family.	<p>...not constantly wondering if I performed well or not during social interactions or ministry opportunities.</p> <p>...able to think about others when I walk into a room full of people even though I used to be obsessively preoccupied with myself.</p> <p>...able to not use people to feel good about myself.</p> <p>...confident because I have a heavenly Father who cherishes me just the way that I am.</p> <p>...released from having to perform to gain the approval of others. My heavenly Father fulfills all of my love and approval needs.</p>
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Here are some practical negative examples:

I have no functional belief or concept that God is...	I...
...redeeming history.	...don't think about God during the day. Instead I get caught up in my job, my kids lives, sports, TV shows, movies, social media. God is disconnected from my everyday life.
...coming back.	<p>...can tend to feel depressed because life feels meaningless.</p> <p>...over-prioritize things that won't make a difference in the grand scheme of things. (material possession, entertainment, social status)</p>
...delightful. Experiencing relationship with Him is pleasurable.	<p>...am regularly bored in life. I move from one hobby to the next. I'm always hungry for something that will entertain or pleasure me but never feel satisfied.</p> <p>...feel bored during Sunday morning services, prayer meetings and Bible reading times.</p>
...a maker of beautiful things.	...tend to feel that I'm not pretty. I worry a lot about fashion wondering if I'm trendy enough. I get feelings of hopelessness or depression when I see other women that I think are pretty or trendy. I believe that everyone knows that I don't measure up on the prettiness scale. I worry if my husband will stay attracted to me.
...just.	<p>...am passive aggressive in relationship with people who have hurt me.</p> <p>...wish that bad things would happen to people that I don't like or that have done wrong.</p>
...loves me.	...get angry at my kids when they act up in public places. I feel embarrassed about their behavior. I'm convinced everyone thinks I'm the worst mom.

	<p>...tend to get depressed feeling like I don't have any friends or that no one likes me.</p> <p>...feel unnoticed at church.</p>
...provider.	<p>...am worried about finances.</p> <p>...am overly concerned about job security.</p> <p>...am obsessively nervous about finding housing during a transition in life.</p> <p>...overwork to make sure we have enough for the present and enough saved for the future.</p> <p>...can get angry at people that do something to take away feelings of comfort about job security and finances.</p>
...present. ...with me.	<p>...feel that darkness and thunderstorms are scary places.</p> <p>...don't like being alone.</p> <p>...feel nervous if the lights aren't all on.</p> <p>...turn on music and TV to drown out feelings of anxiety.</p>
...good.	<p>...STRESS about my future.</p> <p>...feel negative about the situations I'm currently in.</p> <p>...am hurt, angry or hateful because God or people didn't take care of me well enough in the past.</p>
...treating me as an adopted child because Jesus provided for my inclusion in God's family.	<p>...need my spouse, boss, kids, friends, neighbors to approve of me and think well of me. If they don't approve of me I get obsessively defensive. I can quickly have negative opinions of people who don't care for the way I do things.</p> <p>...use people. Then I use them some more. Then they get hurt because I use them. Without knowing it, I have a deep desire to be loved and approved of.</p>

After reading those two charts it's worth restating: an individual's concept of God affects so much of what we think and do. An accurate concept of God can be emotion-changing, healing, protecting, and brokenness-restoring. Our concept of God can help us make life-giving decisions about our values, priorities, responses, words, treatment of others, use of our money and resources, etc. For these reasons...:

**...it's so important that a child grows up developing a positive concept of who God is and what He does.**

It's SO IMPORTANT and, second to God, the people who have the biggest effect on a child's concept of God are Mom and Dad. In the next chapter we'll see just HOW BIG of an effect they have.

# - CHAPTER 5 -

## CONCEPT OF GOD & EVERYDAY LIFE WITH PARENTS

During a child's infancy, a radiance parent primarily reveals God through the way she or he cares for and interacts with him. (Read details/examples about this in chapter 7.)

As a baby grows older, he starts developing the intellectual capacity to learn about God in additional ways, which may include:

- conversations with others.
- verses, songs, Bible stories at church.
- teaching at church or school.
- Vacation Bible School.
- mentors, friends, role models.
- worship and prayer times.
- multimedia resources for Christian education.
- dreams and direct revelation from God. (i.e. God speaking to a child like he did with Samuel)
- etc.

Many of these things can go a long way in HELPING to form an accurate concept of God in a child. However, these methods will be inadequate if all they do is teach a child ABOUT God. God wants a child to experience much more than just learning ABOUT Himself. God wants a child to EXPERIENCE Himself. God wants a child to KNOW and ENCOUNTER Himself.

Picture it this way: a wife doesn't want her husband to just know ABOUT her. It's not special if he can only list a series of facts about the way she is. She doesn't want to be memorized and recited to others. She doesn't want her husband to only know about her through the stories that her mom or college roommates can tell him. A wife wants to be known, encountered and experienced by her husband. She doesn't want to be known from afar. She wants the husband to experience time spent in her company. She wants to have extended conversations with him. She wants to develop a history of sharing memories and partnering together through the

adventure of life's challenges. The only way a husband can have an accurate concept of his wife is by having direct and extended encounters with her.

**Likewise, the only way an individual can have an accurate concept of God is by having direct and extended encounters with Him.**

**Not only does God want a child to encounter Him, God KNOWS that a child's life can't be right without encountering Him.**

To illustrate, I'm going to tell a hypothetical story about a child who lives with a single mom. Before I do, I need to preface my story with a few statements to single moms. #1- I don't know what it feels like for you to parent your children alone, but I imagine that to say, "It's not always easy," is the understatement of the century. #2- There may be times when you wish you could offer more to your child/children. You may wish that they didn't have to live in a home without a dad to care for them. **#3- If your child/children is/are growing up in a broken home it doesn't mean that they are going to have a broken future.** Jesus said this about what he came to earth to do for broken people like you and me:

*"(God the Father) has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor."* (See Isaiah 61 and Luke 4)

Single moms: if you find yourselves wondering what your child/children need(s) most in this broken world it's NOT a more perfect family situation. Your child needs Jesus and the good news is that Jesus will offer himself to you and your child/children. In addition, I believe that Jesus will offer you an extra measure of grace/help as a single mom. He will lift you and carry you as you do your best to follow Him through this stage of your life.

With that being said to single moms, here's the story:

Have you ever seen a movie about a child that lives without a dad in the home? It's evident in the child's actions and attitude that something in life is missing; *something in life is just not right*. The dad may be out of the picture because of death, divorce, work etc. Inevitably the child has tendencies towards being angry, rebellious and acting out. The child consistently has negative relationships with authority figures. Seeing the emotional, social and psychological turmoil of her child, the mom desperately tries to do anything to help. She knows the child needs Dad. She tries to tell stories about what Dad was/is like. She may try to show pictures or video clips of Dad. She tries to provide all the information she can ABOUT Dad hoping to remedy the negative effects of life without direct relationship with Dad. However, all the stories, pictures



and descriptions leave the child with an unfilled need for direct connection. A mere concept of Dad is not enough to make life right. The child needs to be in Dad's arms. The child needs to talk to Dad and be known by Dad. Without Dad's direct influence the child is left to live a generally unhappy life. Everyone watching the story knows what the solution is: "The child needs to be with Dad." "Everything would be fixed if Dad were in the picture."

The same is true with a child and God. There will always be a feeling that something's missing or something is "not quite right" in a child's life unless God is in the picture. A child needs to feel God. A child needs to talk to God and listen to God. A child needs to bear his or her emotions to God. A child needs God's counsel to guide them through life's tough situations. No matter how much information ABOUT God that you throw at the kid (i.e. praise songs, Bible verses, etc.), life won't be quite right unless they encounter God.

But how can an infant or toddler encounter God?

How can they experience direct relationship with God?

How can a 2-year-old feel an invisible God?

How can a preschooler hear and listen to the voice of God who doesn't speak like friends, family and neighbors do?

How can a baby find safety, shelter and comfort in the arms of an armless God?

How can a child put trust in a God they don't know how to see?

In short: **how can a young child (with undeveloped cognitive abilities) interact with a very relevant but intangible, abstract God?**

A primary way that God desires young children to encounter Him (what He is like) (young children who very much operate in the sensorimotor, preoperational and concrete operational stages of cognition), is through parents in the everyday moments of life. Until young children learn how to interact with an intangible God, God has provided a way for children's lives to be 'right' by giving them moms and dads. Mom and Dad can be the arms of an armless God. Mom and Dad can be the voice and touch of God. Mom and Dad can be the audible voice of God that can speak wisdom into the challenging situations of a child's life. Mom and Dad's company can provide a child with the confidence to navigate through a threatening world.

Just in case there's any confusion: I'm not saying that God won't directly encounter a young child through a verse, praise song, dream or Sunday school teaching. He can and He does. Speaking verses and singing truths about God over a sleeping infant can have immediate and visible effects on his or her emotional health. It's also important for parents to talk about God to their growing children and provide them with formal biblical teaching. (See Deut. 6) However, I'm referring to a potentially more powerful way of providing children with access to God. I'm referring to the reality that parents can image God or radiate God's glory to their children in the everyday moments of life.

The apostle Paul, who wrote a lot of letters to some of the first followers of Jesus, taught the following principles that can be applied to parenting:

1. We can personally encounter God (i.e. be in direct relationship with Him).
2. Genuine encounter with God transforms us so that we increasingly bear God's image.
3. Genuine encounter with God leaves us radiant.
4. Our post-encounter-with-God radiance can be unveiled and impact others.

Notice these four principles in the verses below where Paul distinguishes between a lesser radiance (that came from a ministry at work in Moses' time) and a new, outshining radiance (that came from a ministry introduced by Jesus when He came to *make life right* by allowing people to experience direct connection with God again.)

*"7 Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, 8 will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? 9 If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! 10 For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. 11 And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!*

*12 Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. 13 We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away.*

*18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."*

(2 Cor 3.7-13;18)

The significance of these verses can easily be overlooked if you're not familiar with some of the things Paul was aware of:

1. **He was writing to a group of people who were far from perfect.** This means that encountering the Lord's glory, as described in these verses, is not for 'more holy type people'. Resist the thought that YOU can't encounter direct relationship with God. The people in Corinth, like you and me, had issues with pride, sexuality, relational conflict and more. AND Paul was telling them good news: that, because of what Jesus did, they can experience the wonder of contemplating the Lord's glory in a life-transforming kind of way.
2. **Your encounters with God will be more glorious than you can imagine.** Moses spoke with God and it made his face radiant (Exodus 34:29-35). When people saw radiant-faced Moses, they were afraid. It must have been a tangible and impactful radiance if people reacted with fear. Well Paul tells us that we can encounter God in a surpassingly glorious way. Paul even says that the glory on Moses' face isn't even

glorious, anymore, compared to what Jesus followers can experience in direct relationship to God! This is real stuff! This is serious stuff! I'm not saying that you should expect to have your face turn into a glowing stage light after you pray. But I am saying that there is something indescribably glorious (that is undeniably noticeable) on the life of an individual who directly encounters God.

3. **God invites you, through Jesus, to encounter Him and boldly unveil the shining effects to all the people you interact with.** Moses would talk with God and then hide the resulting glory that was evident on his face. Paul says that you should talk with God and NOT hide the resulting glory that will be on your life. He says to let the power of encountering God impact the people around you. People will see noticeably glorious things on your life and have reactions to it. Let them be impacted by it.

Practically speaking, what does “encountering God” and “seeing His glory” look like in everyday life? I'll give a few personal examples here. However, for in depth teaching on this topic, check out these resources:



**At times, “encountering God” and “seeing His glory” may happen even though I’m not looking for it to happen or expecting it to happen.** One night I asked someone to pray for me. He prayed a verse from Micah 6: “He has shown you, o man, what is good and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” I don’t know why, but when he prayed that verse for me I started crying and crying. It was the kind of cry that drains your sinuses. I actually felt a little embarrassed because I didn’t know why I was crying so much. On the way home there wasn’t enough space in my friend’s minivan, so I sat in the trunk. I cried the whole ride home. It was definitely time for bed, but I was too emotional, so I spent 2 hours praying and singing. During those two hours I felt like God was saying to me that the reason why He loves me ISN’T because He HAS to love me. He told me that He enjoys the way that I am and likes me and likes loving me. In the weeks after that encounter with the Lord’s glory, I felt like He was telling me, “Caleb I let you have that significant experience so that you will never have to doubt in the future that I love you, like you and enjoy you.” After having experiences with God like this, my mindset changes. I’m transformed as I become convinced of His love. It allows me to be a more confident person.

**At other times, God’s presence is something that I have to intentionally seek.** It may be setting aside the busy agenda of my day to ask Him, “God what are you feeling right now? What are you thinking about? Will you help me to feel what YOU are feeling?” On another day I might feel a bit down or depressed and I’ll pick up the Bible and read a few chapters in one sitting. Encountering God in that moment feels like having thoughts like, “God, I feel down. But reading this Bible story is helping me. It’s making me feel like I’m a part of a bigger story. These thoughts are changing the way that I feel about my situation(s) today. Thank you God for choosing me to be a significant part of your exciting story.” Having experiences with God like these helps me to feel refreshed. My emotional life is affected. I’m transformed as I see Him relieve stress and give me reasons to be hopeful about the circumstances of my day.

**Sometimes it feels like a “fight” or a “faith-battle” as I try to encounter God.** God sometimes can feel distant. On one such day I wrote a song that said, “I may feel nothing. I may see nothing. But it’s not time for giving up. It’s not time for losing heart. It’s time for a new song. The loving kindness of our God is directed towards us forever. So it’s not time for giving up.” Having experiences with God like these makes my faith grow. It exercises my spiritual muscle. It transforms me by producing in me an increased ability to persevere.



That’s a bit of what it looks like practically. A mom (a very normal and imperfect mom) can boldly radiate the glory of God as she experiences direct, delightful, satisfying relationship with Him. A dad (a very normal dad who, like me, hasn’t formally studied theology) can boldly carry the glorious image of God into his everyday moments of life. As a mom encounters the glory of God, His image begins to increasingly shine through the way she is wired (her personality, her wishes, her dreams, her words, her touch). It’s in these ways that a mom and dad, in the everyday moments of life, can live before their children with unveiled faces and provide them with meaningful encounters with God’s glory. It’s these encounters that will increase the chances that a child will thrive in life.

That’s the good news: that God anoints Mom and Dad to gloriously reflect His nature to their children in the everyday moments of life.

**The bad news is that not many of us offer this experience to our children, nor did we experience this reality growing up.**

To help you think of the way your parents’ values and actions potentially shaped your own concept of God, skim through some of the statements in the chart below.

<p><b>My parents’ values/actions/statements:</b></p>	<p><b>My concept of God/life/self:</b> (note: these could be conscious or subconscious thoughts/conclusions)</p>
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<p>“My parents gave me everything I wanted.”</p>	<p>“God is good if I have what I want. I doubt God’s goodness when life is challenging. If something is missing in my life I wonder why God doesn’t love me enough to give it to me.”</p>
<p>“My parents never told me, ‘No.’”</p>	<p>“I do what I want in life. Why should God tell me the way I should live my life? Life’s decisions boil down to: ‘how will this affect ME?’ If God says He loves me, why doesn’t He let me do what I want.”</p>
<p>“My parents had rules but nothing too serious would happen if we didn’t follow them.”</p>	<p>“I don’t live with an awareness that God’s words are LIFE. My life doesn’t revolve around following God’s directions. I mostly make decisions about what should happen.”</p>
<p>“I was the favorite child.”</p>	<p>“I don’t understand why God doesn’t let me do what I want. I tend to compare myself to others, hoping that I’ll be liked more than them. I tend to worry that God doesn’t think I do well enough as a Christian.”</p>
<p>“I wasn’t the favorite child.”</p>	<p>“There’s something about me that is un-likeable. I hope nobody finds out about my un-likeableness. I’m drawn to God out of Christian duty. I don’t approach God because I feel that He loves me.”</p>
<p>“My parents repeatedly told their friends that I was the most strong-willed of my siblings. That was their nice way of saying that I gave them the biggest headache.”</p>	<p>“I don’t feel like I fit in. I generally feel unwanted. Nobody cares about why I do the things I do. They just prefer me to shape up and behave like the rest of the perfect people around me.”</p>
<p>“My parents were loving, but sometimes clueless. They don’t even know half of what I did when I was out with friends.”</p>	<p>“I have a lot of bad habits. I know God doesn’t want me to do them. I sometimes feel guilty especially at church. No one at church knows of my bad habits.”</p>
<p>“My parents were great people, but they were always telling me what I couldn’t or shouldn’t do. They didn’t trust me.”</p>	<p>“Christian life isn’t fun. Fun is something non-church people have. God is emotionless and wants us to be straightlaced so we can get to heaven.”</p>
<p>“I loved being around my dad. But he wasn’t around much. He showed his love through working hard to provide for the family needs.</p>	<p>“I’ve grown up seeking boys’ attention. I want to be known and enjoyed. I’ve been hurt in lots of unhealthy dating relationships. I wasn’t able to say ‘no’ to a boy/man if I</p>

I didn't really know my dad. He didn't really know me."	thought there was a chance that he might want to know me and love me."
"My mom would try to keep us quiet when dad was home."	"God isn't interested in me. I have to be well behaved and presentable if I want to make Him happy. He's busy with more important things. I've learned to count on myself when I need help."
"My dad yelled a lot. Even when he didn't yell he seemed upset."	"I generally am afraid of making mistakes. If I fail something bad will happen. I wouldn't even begin to dream that God could be warm or affectionate or enjoyable."
"I never knew what was going to make my parents angry."	"I tend to over-worry about how people will respond to what I do. Did I do or say something that they'll misinterpret? Did I meet their expectations for my performance as a friend/ministry worker/family member/employee?"
"My parents went to church. They seemed fake because the way they treated each other (and us kids) at home was awful."	"God, and following Him, is not attractive to me. What's the point of going to church if church-people do awful things even to each other?"
"When I would get hurt and cry my dad would say, 'What are you: a cry baby?'"	"I better be tough in life. Emotions should be hidden. God thinks my feelings are messy and should be handled better. If I were a better person I could handle my emotions better."
"My dad never told me that he loved me."	"God is distant, unfeeling, unconcerned with my life. God may care about providing for my physical needs. But I have to look elsewhere to have my emotional needs taken care of."
"My dad liked TV, sports, time-off, quiet in the house."	"I have to do outstanding things to get the attention that I need/want. I'll do anything to get attention/love. The way I am isn't attractive to God. He's got other things to care about."
"My dad got so angry when I would make a mistake."	"I live my life feeling shame. You say 'pray to God.' I can't. He's mad at me."

“The only time I remember my dad being happy was when I wasn’t around.”	“I’m annoying, disruptive, not worth being enjoyed. God feels that it was a mistake to make me.”
“My dad left us when I was 7.”	“I’ll try my hardest in life to be good. If I’m good enough, I’ll avoid being abandoned.”
“My mom said things like this all the time: ‘You kids are so exhausting.’ ‘Can’t you just be content?’ ‘Why do you always do that?’”	“God is mostly frustrated with my behavior. I’ll try to keep Him un-frustrated with me by being a better Christian. Church and God are stressful things for me.”
“My mom had the TV on all the time in the house. She was happy if we stayed quiet.”	“My emotions aren’t worth knowing/exploring. I have to figure out life myself. I don’t even think that it would be possible for God to want to know me and shepherd me through my experiences in life.”
“My mom addressed the needs of the child that made the biggest fuss.”	“God doesn’t take initiative in my life. If I need something, I’ll have to take care of it on my own.”
“My parents left us to take care of ourselves a lot.”	“I navigate life’s problems on my own. I’m not used to trusting another person to take care of me. It’s hard for me to do things in a different way than I’m used to.

Sadly, many of us struggle to functionally believe biblical truths about God because of what we experienced of our parents when we were younger. Even though our parents loved us, our experiences of Mom and Dad may have contributed to bondage in different areas of life. The bondage can have powerful effect on our lives emotionally, socially, mentally, physically etc.

It may be nice to hear that...

- ...an accurate concept of God is so important because it affects all of an individual's experience of life,
- ...God wants our children to have an accurate concept of Himself,
- ...God mostly wants to use the way we are in the everyday moments of life to introduce our children to the glory of who He is,

...but the past hurts that we carry leave us feeling hopeless that we will ever give our children the blessing of being parents who image God’s character in the everyday moments of life.

In moments like these, let's remind ourselves that...

- ...Radiance Parents aren't perfect parents.
- ...God doesn't use us in spite of our past. He uses the events of our past to shape us into the person we are today.
- ...our past doesn't define who we are. What God says about us defines who we are. And God says, "You are MINE!"
- ...Jesus came to Earth and accomplished what allows us to become Radiance Parents. ...and He says, "For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matt. 9:13)
- ...God doesn't wish that He'd given my kids other (better) parents. He wants ME (just the way I am) to be the parent for my kids. I'M part of the equation God has for launching my children into all that He has dreamed for their lives.
- ...the ability for our children to know God comes from the way Jesus has performed and not the way that we can perform.
- ...our hope for our children to experience life with God lies in Him: the creator of the universe.



You are not alone if you hear about Radiance Parenting and feel like it's not something that your family will ever be able to experience. Yours is actually 1 of 3 typical responses to the good news that God invites you to radiate His glory to your children. Here are the 3 ways you may tend to respond:

**1- Hopelessness and Resignation** because you've heard news that can't apply to someone as messy and broken as you. You may think thoughts like:

- "My life is a mess. There's NO WAY that my kids will know God through me."
- "Radiance Parenting might be for 'good people' but I'm not good enough."

You've concluded that you're a BIG mess. You've also concluded that God isn't big enough for your mess. In other words: the mess of yourself is BIGGER than God. It makes you want to give up. It makes you feel inferior to other people.

The truth is that YOU CAN experience Radiance Parenting because...

- ...your mess doesn't limit what God is able to accomplish in and through you.
- ...your mess is the stage on which God will display His awesome ability to rescue, transform and redeem. (See chapter 1)
- ...it's not something that YOU attain. It's something that God attains in you.
- ...it's not a door that you have to open through your admirable performance as a parent.
- ...it's a door that Jesus has opened for you through His perfect performance on Earth.
- ...God will release a never-ending source of grace, power and anointing for you to do this. He equips those that He's called. And He's called you to be a Radiance Parent.

**2- Duty and Burden** because you've heard news that raises the expectation for your performance as a parent. The news makes you think and believe: "Oh no. Parenting is about



MORE than being a care-taker of little people. I need to radiate GOD to my children as well!? I better memorize this book so I can know how to respond in every situation. I hope I can understand this concept *well enough* so that my children behave *well enough* so that my church friends and pastors think that I'm doing *well enough* as a parent." These conclusions make you feel burdened, exhausted, jealous, judged, etc. It makes you compare yourself to other parents. You compare the behavior of your kids to their kids. Even the steps you take towards knowing God or encountering God or understanding God feel burdensome. If your kids behave well you'll feel hopeful. If they behave poorly you'll feel like giving up.

Becoming a radiance parent DOESN'T go like this:

1. I realize God wants me to be more than a needs-meeter for my child.
2. I realize that God wants me to introduce Himself to my child through the way that I am.
3. I realize that my child can either experience freedom or bondage in life through the way that I am.
4. I conclude that I better get this radiance parenting thing right.
5. I worry thinking, what if I can't get it right? What if my child gets messed up in life because I'm messed up in life?
6. Parenting becomes a burden and a pressure. I may even resent God for setting me up for parenting failure.

Becoming a Radiance Parent goes more like this (as you'll see more below under **#3**

***Excitement and Hope***):

1. God shows you that knowing Him is way more glorious than you could've ever imagined.
2. Knowing Him, as described in 2 Corinthians 3, seems pretty amazing.
3. I want to know God.
4. I experience that knowing God is amazing, fulfilling and pleasurable.
5. I want to keep knowing God.
6. I realize that it's part of Glorious-God's plan for me to be a parent.
7. I want my children to know God like I'm knowing God. I want them to be amazed and fulfilled through knowing Him like I am learning to know Him.
8. Parenting is hard. It's energy-draining. But I'm realizing that there are wide-open doors for my children to know what God is like through the way that I interact with them in the everyday moments of life.
9. God I pray and thank you that you will empower me to radiate your glory. You will empower me to radiate your glory because that's what you are most excited and passionate about. You want your glory to be known. And if you're willing to shine yourself through me, then go ahead and shine. I need you to teach me what this is like.
10. This type of knowing-God-life, and radiating-Him-to-my-kids-life, feels exciting and life-giving. God feels central in this whole process.

**3- Excitement and Hope** because you've heard good news. Good news makes you think and believe: "I don't have to be perfect in order to be used by God in my parenting. Jesus came to rescue sinners. Jesus effectively opened a door for sinners to know God. Knowing God is

more wonderful than I ever could've imagined. I experience that encountering God transforms the way I live the everyday moments of my life (my attitude, values, relationships, priorities, etc.) Life isn't perfect. It's sometimes very hard and messy. However, I have a God who is relevant to the things I experience everyday. I don't fix my problems before I run to God. I run to God because He will fix my problems and love me before my problems are fixed. The concept of Radiance Parenting makes me excited that God wants to use me, even in the everyday moments of parenting, to help my children know Him better."

You don't have to feel hopeless because...

**...God is bigger than your mess.**

You don't have to feel burdened because...

**...this is about God's performance and not your performance.**

**You can feel excitement and hope because God *wants* to reveal Himself to your children through you. And what God wants, He awesomely does.**

There's only one more important chapter before we get into the practical stuff of Part 2. Chapter 6 answers the question, "What are the keys to developing Radiance Parenting skills?"

# - CHAPTER 6 -

## KNOWING GOD: IT'S ESSENTIAL & THE ESSENTIALS

**How can moms and dads, with broken pasts, develop Radiance Parenting skills?**

**1- KNOW GOD** - Invite God to continually show more of Himself to you. Ask God to let you know Him in a way that influences every aspect of your life (knowing that Jesus has made it possible). You can't image or radiate a God you've only heard about. You can only radiate a God that you personally encounter. *(For more, read the rest of this chapter)*

**2- LEAD WELL** - Ask God to help you establish a 'Parents Lovingly Lead and Children Happily Follow' culture in your home. Effectively leading children is such an important Radiance Parenting skill. Kids don't listen to parents that don't lead. Parents aren't leading if their kids aren't in the habit of following. Your words and teaching probably won't matter to your child unless they consistently experience a loving environment where Dad and Mom are the leaders. *(Chapters 7 & 8 give practical strategies for how to lead infants and toddlers well.)*

**3- EYES OPEN** - Learn to take advantage of parenting's everyday-moments to image or radiate God. Realize that God wants to reveal Himself to your children throughout the day. Increase the amount of times that you pause before reacting to something your child does. During the pauses, imagine God and you switching places. How would He talk to your child or respond to what she does? Pay extra attention when your children show emotions (i.e. shame, guilt, anger, frustration, fear, etc.). That's when they MOST NEED a picture of what God is like through your words and actions. *(Chapters 7 & 8 give practical strategies for how to train your eyes to open up and look for moments to radiate God's glory to your children.)*

### **1- Radiance parents have to KNOW GOD**

You can't learn or study your way into Radiance Parenting, because you can't learn or study your way into knowing God. Neither does striving your way into becoming a 'better Christian' make you a Radiance Parent. (Because becoming a 'better' or 'more moral' Christian isn't what

allows you to know God.) Since Radiance Parenting is about imaging the God that you encounter, you have to **experience your way into it**. (Just like you have to experience your way into knowing God.)

Sometimes individuals prefer to study or learn their way into something. Studying is self initiated. A studier thinks: "I want to learn something; so I will do this and this and this in order to learn it." Studying your way into something can feel preferable because it allows an individual to feel in control. But knowing God isn't exactly like that. Knowing God is more relational than academic. God is more like a person to know rather than a principle to study.

I recently agreed to help a young, Indonesian adult practice English. From different sides of the globe, we've been writing short emails to each other about topics including soccer, career and family. Today I got an email from him that said, "*You are married. What is your wife like?*" This is what I wrote back to him:

"I am 32 years old. My wife is 29 years old.  
We got married when she was 22 years old.  
She is the youngest in her family. She has two older sisters and one older brother.  
My wife's name is Sarah.  
In the U.S.A. a woman changes her last name when she gets married.  
Before she married me, my wife's name was Sarah Jean Barbour.  
After we were married, she changed her name to Sarah Jean Howard.  
My wife is shorter than I am. She is 5'2".  
She has curly hair.  
She likes to read books.  
She likes rivers and lakes.  
She's very fun.  
I like to be with her.  
She is my best friend."

I sort of smiled when I wrote this list because I thought to myself, "there's no way that I can begin to describe what my wife is like in a few sentences." The list provided my Indonesian friend with only a glimpse of what she's really like. It's impossible to adequately describe glorious things that can only be known through direct experience or encounter. (Have you ever tried telling someone what the Grand Canyon is like? what losing a family member is like? what going through labor is like?) My friend will never be able to know my wife through hearing information about her. No matter how hard my Indonesian friend studies the description, his ability to know my wife will be inadequate. His ability to help his neighbor know my wife will be even MORE INADEQUATE.

***Trying to radiate God to your child, without personally encountering God, is like my Indonesian friend trying to help his Indonesian neighbor know my wife.***

To even attempt to transfer knowledge of the beauty and wonder of who my wife is requires experience, relationship and encounter with her. The same is true of God and radiance parenting. The only way to begin effectively sharing God with another person is to move beyond distant study of God into close, relational encounter with God. My dad says it this way (about the Gospel):

***Sharing the Gospel is like a virus. You can't pass it along unless you yourself have been infected.***

How do you know if you've moved past *study about God* and into *encounter with God*?

You've encountered God if you've ever:

- gotten scared but then relaxed because you knew and/or felt God's nearness.
- been emotionally hurt but then felt soothed and healed because you knew and/or felt God's love.
- done something wrong but then felt the burden of guilt be replaced with a sense of God's forgiveness.
- noticed a change in your desires. You increasingly desire what God does.
- been confused but God's wisdom cleared things up.
- been unsatisfied by life's experiences but fulfilled when you heard God's voice.
- felt purposeless but then experienced the joy of partnering with God in affectionate obedience.
- See the chart on page 35 for more examples.

These feelings are real, satisfying, meant-for-everyday-life and available to us through Jesus Christ. It's these types of experiences that we want to provide for our children through the way we interact with them in the everyday moments of life. When they get scared, we want our nearness to help them relax. When they have their feelings hurt, we want our love for them to make it okay. When they feel guilty, we want the forgiveness we extend to impact their emotions. Knowing God is essential for being a Radiance Parent who powerfully introduces his/her children to these types of experiences.

It's easy for people (even regular church-attenders) to be confused regarding what it means to know God. Have you ever sat down to think of what knowing God is and what knowing God isn't? There are people that go to church that don't personally know and encounter God. Knowing God isn't being an active member of a religious group. Knowing God doesn't necessarily come from church attendance, Bible reading, verse memorization and financial gifts towards religious institutions. Doing right or moral things doesn't mean that you know God. There are very moral people who live very unfulfilled lives. Knowing God isn't something that you can earn the ability to do. All the right things you do don't open a door for you to know God.

A simple way to start understanding what it means to know God is to imagine God as a person. You can know Him like you can know a person. You can spend time with Him or *NOT* spend

time with Him. You can let yourself be known by Him or try to hide yourself from Him. You can share cares, anxieties and passions or you can keep things superficial. You can ask Him to share more of Himself with you. You can demonstrate love for Him in response to His demonstrations of love for you. You can tell Him and show Him that you want more of Him. When He shows you more of what He's like, you can tell Him that you like the way He is. You can care (or not care) about what He thinks. You can make decisions that are influenced by the reality of who He says He is.

You'll know you've encountered truth about God if it affects/changes your emotions, priorities, values, relationships etc. Remember: you can't know God and remain unchanged. And you can't experience lasting change without knowing God.

**Knowing God is irresistibly fulfilling and pleasurable.** The Bible teaches, and the lives of history's saints declare, that knowing God is preferable above all things.

- In Philippians, Paul wrote, "I count everything as a loss compared to knowing God."
- Brother Lawrence, in *The Practice Of The Presence Of God*, says, "How happy we would be if we could find the treasure of which the Gospel speaks; all else would be as nothing. As it is boundless, the more you search for it the greater the riches you will find; let us search unceasingly..."
- John Piper says, "But to enjoy Him we must know Him. Seeing is savoring. If He remains a blurry, vague fog, we may be intrigued for a season. But we will not be stunned with joy, as when the fog clears and you find yourself on the brink of some vast precipice."
- Jesus says in John 17:3 "this is eternal life: that they may know you". It's interesting that Jesus didn't say, "This is eternal life: that you live forever in a mansion of gold." Jesus didn't come primarily to rescue sinners so that they could be saved from the flames of hell and live in a heavenly mansion instead. He came to reconcile sinners with God so that they could have restored relationship with Him. This is what Jesus called eternal life. This is what Jesus knew was incomparably best.

**Knowing God is something that we get to do for all of life and eternity.** Knowing God is not something that we'll start and eventually finish. If you think you've run out of things to know about God, you're wrong. If you think you sufficiently know that God is good, there's more of God's goodness to explore. Sometimes people think heaven will be boring because we'll be praising God with the same phrases over and over...forever. How many times can we say or sing, "God you're good. God you are merciful"? After a thousand years of hearing fresh and exhilarating things about God's goodness and mercy, we'll hear more. And each time we hear more we'll say things like, "I never knew that your goodness went to this depth!" "I never knew that your mercy was this awesome!" It will be an emotional, fulfilling and satisfying process for us to uncover an eternity full of experiential knowledge about what God is like.

**Knowing God is something that's relevant to everything you do throughout your whole life.** It's easy to divide life into compartments. (A career compartment, home compartment, hobby compartment, church compartment) If we start our day by reading a chapter of the Bible,

that might be our 'devotions' compartment. Maybe our life on Sunday at church feels very disconnected from our life during our week at work. God has more delightful plans regarding life and the way it should be lived. God desires your life to have one compartment. It's called the 'Knowing God and following Him into every area of life' compartment. Jesus lived this way. Speaking of how He lived His own life on earth, Jesus said: "...I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me." Knowing God should affect our first and last thoughts of the day. It should affect what we eat and how we spend our money. Even the way we handle conflict in relationships should be influenced by what we know of God. Knowing God is relevant to everything.

### **Jesus has opened the Knowing-God-Door for you**

To know God you need Jesus.

(Side note: As I've mentioned, before, I haven't completed any formal theological training. I say that again, here, because I'm about to include the story, in short, of how Jesus opened the Knowing-God Door for you and me. I won't tell it perfectly. I won't do justice to the beauty of the Gospel. I simply offer it to you as my weak attempt at telling the real story of how we can know God through Jesus.)

**1- Human beings knew God.** God created Adam and Eve. He walked with them in the paradise that He created and gave them. They knew Him. God talked to them and they saw God and were seen by Him. Life with God was without shame, guilt, pain and condemnation. Adam and Eve treated each other well. They experienced a peace we can't even dream of experiencing.

**2- Their decision to sin cut them off from knowing God.** Adam and Eve's actions, in response to God's voice, were similar to what my oldest daughter did a lot when she was 2. She would say, "No Daddy! I will NOT do what you say." That's how Adam and Eve sinned; they rejected God's way in favor of a way they thought was better. God had told them to enjoy everything except the fruit that was on a tree, which God called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Instead of doing what God said, Adam and Eve followed advice that they thought was better. Adam was passive. Blame entered the picture. The consequence of Adam's sin was for God's curse to fall on humanity and the rest of creation. Death overtook human beings. Relational conflict characterized life with family, friends and strangers. People did not know God. The world became so evil, and full of suffering, that God was sad that He had created Earth. He destroyed Earth with water but saved for Himself a remnant of human beings and animals to populate the earth again.

Human beings were still in the pit they dug for themselves because of sin.

God started a process of reconciling human beings to Himself. He chose for Himself a people; a man called Abraham and his descendants (later called the Israelites). He was relational with

them. He revealed Himself to them through covenants, signs and wonders, prophets and more. He revealed Himself as a rescuer, provider, guide. He gave them an inheritance. But, in return, His people rejected Him and His invitations for them to find blessing in obedient relationship to Him. (You can find out about what God felt about this in passages like Ezekiel 16 and Jeremiah 2:1-13.)

The story of humanity seemed to be turning out like a tragedy. God made human beings and they quickly rejected His ways and the blessing of relational connection with Him. God chose for Himself a people and they consistently rejected His ways and the blessing of living in right relationship with Him.

**3- God sent Jesus to effectively make a way for human beings to experience reconciled relationship with God.** In the middle of this tragedy, God foretold a hopeful turn of events. Through prophets like Jeremiah (see Jeremiah 31:31-34), God told what was forthcoming in His story of being relational with human beings. He was to interact with human beings in a new way. He was going to reveal Himself to them in a take-your-breath-away kind of way. He was going to reveal Himself to them through His son, Jesus. Hebrews 1:1-3 says why this is so incredible and important. It explains that Jesus is the **radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature**. Human beings were going to get more than names of God, or acts of God, they were going to get God Himself.

There was still bad news, though. Human beings were alienated from God and enemies of God in their minds because of their evil behavior. (Colossians 1:21) Even though God was coming to the world, in the person of Jesus Christ, human beings had a condition that kept them away from God. The Knowing-and-Encountering-God door was closed to them.

We need to realize that this is devastating. It's not just elementary Sunday school material. Not being in relationship with God is forfeiting an ability to have strength, power, wisdom, life, happiness, pleasure, fulfillment, love and more. We've exchanged Glory for broken cisterns that don't hold water (Jeremiah 2:13). It's like losing EVERYTHING. The truth is that if we don't have God, we have NOTHING AT ALL. That's why the Bible describes us as being in a pit (Psalm 103:4); kicking around in our blood (Ezequiel 16). Restated: our decision to sin is our decision to say NO to a pleasurable life in relationship with the fountain of beauty, joy and delight. Our decision to sin is our decision to say YES to a life of being in a dark pit, kicking around in our blood, with no way out on our own. No matter how good we can make our lives look (nice house/clothes, kids in 'fun' extra-curricular activities, shaky politeness in relationship with our spouse) our true reality is this: **we're in a dark pit kicking around in our blood**.

God, to the *praise of His glorious mercy*, purposes that some would be rescued from the pit of 'life without relationship with Himself'. To be rescued from broken relationship with God means that something has to be done with the thing that separates us from God: SIN. Our sin is piled up on us and the consequence for its presence in our lives is the experience of a wrathful death at the hands of God (Romans 6:23). Being that God is forgiving doesn't mean that He makes



our piled-up sins disappear. He doesn't just throw our sin into a 'sea of forgetfulness.' NO! In order that His *justice will be praised*, God must execute such a terrific and complete punishment for sin.

**So how can God be praised for His mercy (an observer's response to watching God forgive sinners) and be praised, also, for His justice (an observer's response to watching God pour out terrible wrath upon a sin-bearing person)?**

God provided that Jesus would be our substitute; that Jesus, instead of us, would bear the punishment for our sins. Jesus, in loving and worshipful response to His Father's will, came and bore the sins of those the Father wants to be in relationship with. Jesus' Father desired that His perfect and beloved Son (instead of us) would be crushed by the terrific, complete, terrible, awesome and God's-justice-glorifying punishment. At the cross God lifted from us the piled-up sin that was suffocating us and drowned Jesus with it. At the cross God executed His wrathful punishment onto His perfect Son, Jesus, who was now the bearer of our sin. At the cross, God was satisfied that His justice was praised through how sin was not overlooked or forgotten. Every sin was satisfactorily punished. And Jesus bore it all. What was separating us from an ability to be in relationship with God was taken care of by Jesus. Hallelujah!

**4- We can know God as our Father and Jesus as our brother. Being in relationship with them, we can experience the best quality of life on earth and pleasures forevermore in heaven.**

God, to the *praise of His glorious grace*, was willing for another transaction to happen at the cross on our behalf. All the righteousness that Jesus had accumulated from His perfect, mistakeless, sinless life on earth was placed upon us. Because of His perfection, Jesus had wonderful, intimate, enjoyable access to relationship with God. He knew God. God was His Father and Jesus was the recipient of His constant delight. At the cross God gave us the relational privileges that He extends to His perfect Son. The Bible says that this means we were adopted (Ephesians 1:5-6). This means that we are God's children and that Jesus is our brother (John 20:17).

We were once alienated from God because of our sin. We were once enemies of God because of our sin. Now we are inheritance-receiving, delighted-in, danced-over, eternally-loved children unshakably secure because it's based on our brother Jesus' perfect, sinless performance of life on earth.

Jesus did it. By removing our sin and placing on us His righteousness, He opened up the Knowing-God Door. There IS a way for human beings to know God. And knowing God is eternal life. And knowing God is relevant to everything we experience in life. It's emotion-healing, brokenness-restoring, life-giving, and relationship-fixing.

**How do you walk through the Knowing God Door that Jesus has opened?**

Walking through the Knowing God Door that Jesus has opened will feel different to different people. For some it will feel instantaneous. For some it will feel like a process that takes place over a series of years. For some it will feel logical. For some it will feel very emotional. Some will be young and some will be old. Some will walk through the door alone and in response to a dream. Some will walk through the door surrounded by people.

What's common to all of us is that the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to our sin and need of God's rescue. When our spiritual eyes are open, we are struck by our desperate reality: we have sins piled up, we are pit-dwelling (Psalm 103) and we're "kicking in our blood" (Ezekiel 16). We hear the news that Jesus is willing to effectively rescue us. We cry, "Jesus please rescue me!" Jesus says, "I will." Jesus says, "Not only will I rescue you, but you can have my righteousness. I'll make you my brother and I'll introduce you to our Father."

When we experience Holy Spirit leading us in this soul-rescuing process, we can't believe how incredibly delightful, healing, restoring and relevant-to-all-of-life it is. He leads us in a process of restoration so that we're ready for a plan He has set for relationship with Him throughout all eternity. These realizations and experiences affect our values, emotions, priorities, thoughts about the future, etc.

It's very unlikely that this soul-rescuing process will effectively progress if you live in relational isolation. You need other people (Jesus' other brothers and sisters) to help you know and follow God through the messiness of life. You need to live open; letting some trusted people know you (and your family) in an unfiltered way. You will likely need trained, biblical counselors to help you unpack the crippling effect of inaccurate concepts of God that were developed through the pain of your past. The process of walking through the Knowing God door isn't pain free. Similar to my children learning to come under my authority, there can be lots of tears, battles, emotions and messiness. However, the process is beautiful and it's the only thing that makes life right.

Sometimes walking through the Knowing God Door can be a struggle. The Christian life is full of temptation, distraction, discouragement, faith-battles, hope-battles, disillusionment, etc. To know how to handle some of these things, take advantage of some of the resources below:

To learn more about: (links to resources forthcoming)

- hearing God's voice:
- encountering God through reading the Bible:
- how to deal with pain from your past:
- how to overcome addiction:
- God's vision for your life as a woman:
- God's vision for your life as a man:
- what God's purpose is for your life:
- how/why to pray:

- ideas for praying:
- how to experience God's manifest presence:
- how to keep loving God when it gets really hard:

Can you see how no amount of religious activity can help us genuinely know God? Religious activity doesn't effectively deal with the reason why we're unable to be in relationship with God. It doesn't deal with the reason why we can't know God. Our 'good,' religious behavior doesn't take away our sin. Nothing we can do can convince God to forget our sins. Sin must be punished. Jesus death, on our behalf, allows us to know God.

Knowing God, through the door of Jesus Christ, is the key to Radiance Parenting. Knowing God is for you and me. Knowing God is for the weak, dependent, spiritual-eyes-opened type of people that have a habit of saying 'Jesus please rescue me' while walking through the mess of everyday life. Knowing God is for the ones who believe that...:

- ...He Himself is willing to come and indwell them (John 14:23).
- ...their body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).
- ...Holy Spirit speaks to them (Romans 8:16, John 14:26).

Radiance Parents let the grace that's been extended to them begin to fill the 'air' of their homes. Parents that know God will:

- know His forgiveness. Their experience of mercy will spill over into their interactions with their family members. They will be less impatient and demanding.
- know His love. Their experience of God's affection will make them more happy, secure and confident people. Their happiness will spill over into their interactions with family members. They will be less grumpy and unpleasant.
- know His wisdom. Their experience of God's word influencing their lives will cause them to make better decisions. Life will feel more worthwhile and purposeful to their family members.
- know His power. Their experience of His power will give them faith to see God's hand at work in their family members. The family will be used to telling others of miracles that happen in their family every day.

Let your experiences with God spill over into your privileged call as a parent. God's invited you to let the glory of who He is be declared over/radiated to/washed over your child in the everyday moments of life.

### **Wrapping Up Part 1 (Chapters 1-6)**

To summarize the first half of this writing:

- Parenting is messy and difficult and exhausting.
- The concept of Radiance Parenting can energize you during what used to be the tedious, energy-draining moments of everyday life.

- Radiance Parenting is partnering with God to form, in a child, a healthy concept of God through encounters with Mom and Dad in the everyday moments of life.
- A concept of God is a phrase used in this book to refer to an individual's functional theology.
- An individual's concept of God so important. It affects so much of what they think, do and say.
- A concept of God can be affected by many things. However it's dramatically affected by an individual's experience of Mom and Dad.
- Even though we've experienced brokenness in our past, Jesus has made a way for us to know God and radiate His glory.
- The blessings we experience in knowing God can 'spill over' and affect the 'air' or environment of our home.

The rest of the book will help parents learn how to keep their **EYES OPEN** for moments to radiate God's glory to their children. It will also provide practical strategies for how to **LEAD WELL** through the first stages of a child's life.

# Part 2

## GETTING PRACTICAL

**Disclaimer:** *This is the part of the book where we will give a lot of practical suggestions. We DON'T assume that these are the ONLY ways to raise an infant/toddler well. There may be ideas that WON'T work well for you and your family. This is just what we did and we offer it to you in written form in case you find it helpful like it was for us.*

# - CHAPTER 7 -

## RADIANCE PARENTING AN INFANT

One night I was praying for my baby, almost at the point of tears. “God! O God, would you please let my baby grow up to know you. Let her feel the safety of your presence. She needs to know you! Etc.” In the middle of my prayer I felt like God interrupted me to say:

“Caleb, the answer to your question/prayer is yes. But I want you to know that I’m letting her know me now. You don’t realize it, but I’m letting her know me through YOU. Through your arms, I’m letting her know I hold her. Through Sarah feeding her every 3 hours, I’m letting her know that I will always give her everything she needs. Through your touch, I’m letting her know that I’m not far away. I’m letting her know me NOW. And the way I’m letting her know me is through you.”

That realization changed everything for me. It made all the moments of infant care (which got very exhausting and even frustrating) potentially very sacred moments. The doors are wide open for an infant to receive revelation of God!

Maybe the list below (not comprehensive) will help open your eyes, like mine were opened. May it will help you discern when the Holy Spirit is providing an opportunity for your child to experience what God is like through her encounters with you.

Keep your <b>EYES OPEN</b> . When you give your baby the experience of _____...	...the Holy Spirit may be using you to tell your baby:
Touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● You are not alone.</li> <li>● God is close to you.</li> </ul>
Whispers and hearing a mother’s/father’s voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God speaks to you.</li> <li>● God has things to say to you.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God's words are calming, soothing.</li> </ul>
Feeding/Nursing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Nourishment comes from God.</li> <li>● Provision comes from God.</li> <li>● What comes from God is delicious and satisfying.</li> <li>● God is close and intimate.</li> <li>● The warmth of the one who feeds you is intimate.</li> </ul>
Consistent feeding from one day to the next.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God takes care of all of your needs.</li> <li>● You can count on being fed and nurtured.</li> <li>● Someone bigger than you is concerned for your physical and emotional needs.</li> </ul>
Warmth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The presence of God is a nice, wonderful place to be.</li> <li>● You're safe and comfortable with God.</li> <li>● You're sheltered from outside elements with God.</li> </ul>
Response to a cry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In your need, you can cry out to God and be heard.</li> <li>● You can ask God for help.</li> <li>● God is willing to hear you.</li> </ul>
No response to a manipulative cry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● You're not the center of the world.</li> <li>● His plans are higher than your plans</li> <li>● God knows better.</li> <li>● God is wise.</li> <li>● God will do what's best for you.</li> <li>● God won't be manipulated by your unnecessary cries.</li> </ul>
Laughing in the home or car	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God is fun, delightful, enjoyable.</li> <li>● God likes you.</li> </ul>
Play time / face-to-face time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God wants time with you.</li> <li>● God likes to be with you.</li> <li>● God sees you.</li> <li>● God notices you.</li> </ul>
etc	

Talk about #parentingHOPE!!! The list above shows that your job is not insignificant. You are more than just a needs-meeter. You have the opportunity to radiate God's glory to your infant. I encourage you to pray for your baby as you meet her needs. Pray that she will know that God makes her clean when you bathe her. Pray that she will know that God is close to her messiness when she spits up or you change her diaper. When you hold her, pray that she will know that God is close and His presence protects her. When you look into her face, pray that she will know that God loves to see her and look at her. Keep your Radiance Parenting **EYES OPEN**. God wants to use the way you care for an infant to show her what He's like.



# - CHAPTER 7 -

## BEFORE THE BABY ARRIVES

### **LEAD WELL** even BEFORE the baby arrives

There are several things you can do to prepare yourself physically, emotionally and spiritually for your newborn's arrival. You can prepare yourself by realizing some important **Realities**:

**Reality #1:** Parents have an awesome responsibility.

God is choosing YOU to care for life. He has dreamed of this baby. The thoughts He has for this baby are many (Ps. 139). He has been with this baby in the womb. His eyes have seen her unformed body. No one else sees the baby's unformed body. He is knitting her together. He is PASSIONATE about the individual He's forming. Reminding yourself of truths, like these, will help you realize the importance of your job; energizing you to be intentional about how you parent your infant.

**Reality #2:** It takes a lot to care for an infant. It takes all you have PLUS grace from God to care for a baby's needs. For this season of life, some other things that have been occupying your time will have to be "put on the back burner" so to speak. You won't have time for much else.

How to practically respond to Reality #2:

- As much as possible, allow yourself space to focus on your infant. Remove other obligations from your life so that your baby can have the attention she needs and so that you don't overextend yourself. If you are over-extended and have lots of obligations that divide your time and attention, you may be too exhausted or frustrated to lead your baby well through this stage.
- As much as you can, get good rest during pregnancy. Both Mom and Dad should try to get to bed earlier. Mom should limit what she does physically and more so as the pregnancy progresses.
- Make sure your body gets what it needs nutritionally. Resist the urge to eat whatever you want or whenever you want. Do some research and talk to your doctor to develop a

plan for what you should eat and avoid eating. Think of your body as God's way of providing for the infant you carry. Motivated by a love for the baby you carry, be responsible and intentional about what you do and eat. Dads should eat healthy as well. Not only will it help your wife know that you are "in this together," it will also help you be as healthy as possible so you can have the energy you need to carry your share of the "caring for Baby load."

- Consider saying, "no" to extra and unnecessary obligations starting a couple months before your due date.
- During the first and second trimester of pregnancy do as much as you can to plan ahead. Get everything ready for the baby. Take advantage of times you feel more energy to do projects you know will have to get done, rather than save them for later when you may feel increased physical limitations. This will be especially important in the event that your baby is born prematurely or you experience late stage complications that require bed rest.

**Reality #3:** You will need extra physical, emotional and spiritual support during labor, delivery and during the weeks after the baby is born.

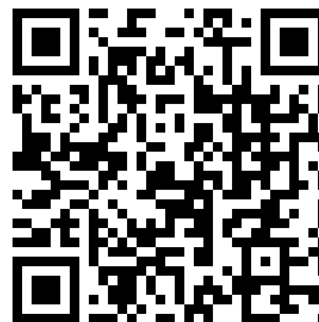
How to practically respond to Reality #3:

- During the third trimester, prepare your spiritual heart to receive needed truth about God. 1- Both Mom and Dad can write down thoughts, worries, concerns, hopes, dreams, fears you have about labor, delivery and postpartum. 2- Talk about these emotions with each other, with a counselor and/or with any other people that you find are emotionally and spiritually supportive. 3- Through the journaling, and verbal processing with others, try to identify patterns of worry or fear. It may be that you are worried that you won't be a good mom. It may be that you don't feel like you have what it takes to be a dad. You may be overly concerned about what other moms/women will conclude about you and your performance as a mom. Etc. 4- Identify sources of truth that will bring perspective and hope. You may find a song, verse, book, magazine article, sermon that encourages you with a right perspective about your worry. 5- Consider making a playlist or compilation CD with songs that encourage you. Pick songs that will help you find hope during different stages of becoming parents (scan the qr code to see Sarah's childbirth playlist on Spotify). 6- Consider writing a series of encouraging verses that help you focus on truth in the middle of times of worry. You can write them down on index cards and keep them next to your bed. Read them when times get hard. Write them throughout a scrap book and leave spaces to add pictures of your new born baby. All of these things will help you know and believe truth to help you walk through challenging circumstances.



**Reality #4:** Husbands: you need to realize that your wife is going to need extra support. Soon your wife is going to give birth to another human being! She's going to need extra care for a lot of valid reasons which may include:

- Her body will need time to heal. (Some doctors recommend up to 6 weeks or more of modifying regular household duties/activities in order to heal.)
- Her body will be going through significant hormonal changes during labor, delivery and postpartum.
- Becoming a mother can be a very emotional transition. Her identity develops/changes. Her life's responsibility and time schedule goes through drastic changes. (Read about Sarah's childbirth/postpartum experience by scanning the qr code.)
- Her spiritual heart goes through a significant journey as she responds to God's invitation to reveal His mothering heart to the baby.



How husbands should respond to Reality #4:

Husbands: realize that it's your job to think through and plan for her support. Don't let her be the only one thinking of how she's going to need extra support. If you are available to be by her side during the days after delivery, provide the extra support yourself and provide it around the clock. Even if you can't take off lots of time from work, energetically make plans for how your wife will be provided for physically, emotionally and spiritually. A husband and a new dad needs to ENGAGE, ENGAGE, ENGAGE.

**Plan for the mother to be relieved of extra duties** (housework, errands, less responsibilities with older children. A new mother's ministry load at church should be put on hold.)

1- Write out a list of household chores. Decide, and write down, who is going to do them. Remember that when a mother's body is healing the doctor will recommend that she not lift anything heavier than the baby for a period of time. If you aren't available to pick up the extra workload, call on your friends and extended family to help. If you don't have friends or extended family available, hire extra help. If you can't hire extra help, stay up a bit later to get the jobs done yourself. Dad's should not think of this stage of life as a stage where he can focus on his hobbies or interests. If Dad likes TV, he shouldn't like TV for the weeks that the baby is young. If a dad likes to work out at the gym or ride his motorcycle, this is NOT a time to enjoy those hobbies. You must rearrange your life's priorities. Your priority list should look like this:

1. Hear God's voice. (So you know how to navigate through life)
2. Support your wife physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
3. Make sure your other kids are cared for.
4. Do what's needed to maintain your job/income.



Priorities 1-4 should be taking up pretty much all of your time. If you are used to having other priorities, let them go. They are not as important. (Read more about this by scanning the qr code.)

Here's a little insight into what my life as a husband and dad looked like during the first week of our first child's life. I don't share the list to suggest that I did things perfectly. I share it so husbands can have detailed vision for how much they should get involved in supporting their wives.

- I became an expert diaper changer. I changed all the diapers so my wife could sit/lay/rest/heal as much as possible.
- I wiped runny poop off the wall when our daughter let off a crap bomb in the middle of a diaper change!
- I got all the meals ready (which mostly meant warming them up in the microwave since we had a wonderful group of friends that took turns bringing us meals for the first few weeks.)
- I sat for sometimes 1-2 hours at a time listening to what my wife was experiencing emotionally about becoming a mother. I prayed for her and encouraged her with truth about God and her identity.
- I woke up when it was time for night time breast feeding. I brought the baby to my wife and returned the baby to bed after burping and cleaning her when the feeding was done.
- I helped my wife do research and make calls when breastfeeding was A LOT harder than we thought.
- Etc.

2- Help your wife think of things that might need to be done before and after the baby comes. Write down an action plan for how and when those things will get taken care of. This list can include things like:

- getting the house and Baby's room ready.
- making sure the baby has the supplies she will need.
- scheduling child birthing class at the hospital.
- making sure paperwork is submitted for maternity leave.
- make sure your paperwork is submitted or ready to be submitted for the days you will take off from work to be near your wife.
- packing what you'll need for labor and delivery and your time in the hospital.
- making arrangements for your other children to be cared for while you're at the hospital.
- arranging for how your family will eat in the weeks that your wife will be recovering.
- etc.

3- If it's hard for your wife to say, "no" to extra responsibilities, encourage her that by doing so it will allow her to more fully respond to God's invitation to let His voice speak through her encounters with the infant.

### **Provide emotional support**

There are a lot of things that may make this season of your wife's life more emotional.

1. The hormonal changes your wife will experience are real and they can have a real impact on her emotions.
2. It can be emotionally vulnerable to become a mom. She may feel the pressure of not being seen as a failure of a mom.
3. Becoming a mom changes so much about life. It will affect your wife's sleeping patterns and the amount of time she has for herself. It will affect her decisions. She will now filter all her decisions through the question "How will this affect my baby?"

Because this time can be so emotional, it's important to plan to provide for her emotional support. Plan to leave extra time in your day to talk with her about her experiences. Some couples find that they need at least 30 to 60 minutes per day just for talking! You'll need to ask her questions like:

- "How are you feeling today?"
- "What does your body feel like?"
- "Based on how it's going today, what is being a mom like compared to what you thought it would be like?"
- "How is Baby doing today?"
- "Are there any things that are concerning/worrying you that I can support you with?"
- "What responsibilities can I take off of your plate?"
- "What pressures are you feeling? What people/things most make you feel pressured or vulnerable?"
- After she talks for a little bit about how she feels, in response to one of your questions, ask her, "what else do you feel about that?"

It can be important for your wife to receive additional emotional support as well. Encourage her to talk with one emotionally and spiritually supportive friend. It may be that her emotions feel overwhelming. Encourage her to seek professional, biblical counseling if this is the case.

Your wife's body will be going through a lot of changes. She will be gaining weight. The shape of her hips, stomach, breasts and more will be changing. It's likely that this will make your wife feel vulnerable about the way that she is. It may make your wife feel defensive. It may make her seem irritable. She may get mad at you for not noticing or noticing different things about her and what she does or wears. It's important for you to be a safe place for her emotionally. Don't get mad if she seems irritable or defensive. Do a lot of listening. Prepare your mind to be patient. If you feel like she takes stress out on you, let her do it. You'll find that as you are patient and open-hearted with her, her heart will soften. When it does, these are excellent times to speak truth over her. Here's the kind of things she may need you to say to her repeatedly:

- I'm so proud of you.
- What you are doing for our unborn baby is so significant.
- God is using you in such significant ways.
- I think you are really pretty.

- Be careful of thinking that you have to have a pregnant body that looks like the cover of pregnancy magazines.
- Pregnancy is not about being glamorous. Pregnancy is about following God on an amazing journey of Him using your body to nurture a beautiful creation that He's forming within you.
- You make that outfit look really nice.
- Let's go out to dinner together.
- I'm very proud of the way that you are being intentional about what you eat and don't eat. You are already making decisions that are helping our baby's health.
- I love to be with you.
- I can't wait to be your husband through this next stage of life.
- etc.

### **Provide spiritual support**

I want my home to be a place where my wife and children hear God's voice and enjoy God's nearness. As much as possible, I wanted my wife and I (and our newborn) to experience God's presence even when we were learning how to change diapers and facing the next day after not much sleep the night before. No matter how much our baby slept at night, we always tried to start our day at 7am. I would open the curtains, turn on lights and play encouraging praise songs on the cd player. I would lay my hands on my exhausted wife and pray God's strength, comfort and peace over her. I would pick up my swaddled newborn and pace back and forth through the bedroom. I would cry as I sang songs to her and prayed that God would begin/continue introducing Himself to her.

It's very important for husbands to provide spiritual support. Remember, the job you BOTH have of parenting an infant is much more important than simply meeting a newborn's needs. What is happening in your life is very spiritual and holy. You are the conduits God has chosen to radiate His glory to your baby. Remind your wife of how important the job is. Encourage her with truths like:

- God is with you (John 14:18).
- He is mighty to save (Zephaniah 3:17).
- Though you walk through the waters they will not overwhelm you (Isaiah 43:2).
- God is a refuge and strength (Psalm 46:1).
- He's a present help in time of trouble (Psalm 46:1).
- He will equip you with everything good for doing his will (Hebrews 13:21).

Pray with her during pregnancy. Pray for the baby, your home, your roles as parents and more. You can't share the responsibility of carrying the baby in her womb, but you can partner with her in SO MANY other significant ways. You can pray something like this:

*"God we need you. Will you please prepare us for the awesome job of letting the way we interact with our baby declare things to him/her about you? We want you to open up spiritual*

*doors for our baby to encounter what your voice is like through us. Would you please anoint our actions, words and touch with the presence of your Holy Spirit. Give us grace to hope in you when things get exhausting. Help us remember that our job is very important”*

# - CHAPTER 7 -

## THE FIRST WEEKS OF YOUR BABY'S LIFE (0-6 WEEKS)

***Introduce Baby to a safe life.***

***Keep your EYES OPEN. Your infant can experience God through the way that you meet his needs. Let God radiate His glory to your newborn baby through the consistent way that you care, nourish and nurture him.***

If your infant could talk, you'd want to hear him say the following 'Baby Can Experience' phrases after this first stage of radiance parenting is done:

- "My needs are met."
- "I'm comfortable."
- "I'm not neglected."
- "I'm consistently experiencing that life is safe and satisfying."

It's important to note that the statements above are pretty God-less. Later on in the book there will be a noticeable difference in the way these phrases will be worded. At this initial stage of life, you'll notice that your baby isn't even very aware of who is around him. Life, from his perspective, is focused on what he feels. He doesn't think about others like he will when he grows up. A newborn isn't even very aware of *who* is meeting his needs, just that his needs are being met or not.

Keep in mind, however, that this doesn't mean you shouldn't introduce him to who you are and what you do. It would be good to get close to his face. Be personal with the baby and say things like, "Your mommy is close," "Your daddy is here," and "Mommy feeds you." Saying phrases like these will give your baby his first opportunities to hear truth that sounds like:

- God is right there.
- God is close.
- God loves you.



- God cares for all your needs.
- You're safe in God's arms.
- God shelters and protects you.

By consistently meeting his needs, he will start feeling that life is safe. Let your touch tell your child that God is with him. Introduce him to the reality that you respond to their cry. Let your response to his cry radiate to your infant that God brings peace. Start telling him that nourishment comes from you; that you are the source of their food. Let the nourishment you provide radiate to your child that God gives him everything he needs and that what God gives is good. Let him hear your voice and feel your touch while you clean him and change his diapers. Let those times be the first encounters your child gets with the truth that God is the one who makes him clean.

Consider allowing the following 3 things to focus your energy, and priorities, during these 6 weeks:

### **1- Focus your energy on caring for your baby's needs.**

Eliminate (or reduce) extra responsibilities/activities. Don't let extra responsibilities or unnecessary activities get in the way of the privilege you have of declaring God's glory to your child through encounters with you.

Be intentional and thoughtful about caring for an infant. The baby isn't delivered with an infant care instructional manual. However, there are many people who have shared (or would be willing to share) ways that they've done a great job at caring for infants. Ask for help and do research. There are many good books about how to care for an infant. Your doctor's office will also suggest resources that you should consider. (Side note: Although we found some books to be very helpful, we didn't find that we followed any single book's advice to a "T." Babies are different and have varied and particular needs. We recommend that you read books to gather *portions of information* that are particularly helpful for *your* baby and family. We also recommend that you follow your doctor's advice regarding decisions concerning your baby's health and well being. When it comes to making decisions about the care your baby receives, your doctor's recommendation should be more influential than advice you read in books including this one.)

With that being said, it's important to know that no one can know and take care of your infant like you can. You'll know your baby better than anyone. Spend time watching your baby. Notice what your baby does at different times. Take a little extra time one day to watch your baby sleep. Watch what their face does when they fall asleep. See what they do when they're asleep and right before they wake up. Analyze how your baby responds to different interventions when he cries.

Here are a few principles (not comprehensive) that helped us care for a newborn infant. Contact your pediatrician for more comprehensive baby care suggestions. Remember: the principles below are simply the ones that worked well in our family. The way we cared for our infant isn't the only way to radiate God's glory to a baby. We encourage you to explore these and other principles to find a method of caring for your infant that allows you to uniquely and powerfully image God to them through your care.

Care for newborn Tip #1: For a nursing mom who has yet to produce breast milk (the baby is being nourished by the mother's colostrum):

- Feed the baby as often as he is hungry to encourage milk production during the first several days after birth.
- Maximize the amount of skin-to-skin contact between Baby and Mother.
- Gently encourage alertness during feeding time to maximize the amount of milk/colostrum the baby ingests. You can encourage alertness by encouraging uninterrupted sleep during the minutes/hours before feeding time. If your baby is still not alert during feeding, consider stimulating the baby. You can stimulate a baby by:
  - taking extra baby clothes off.
  - picking the baby up under the armpits and talking to the baby.
  - turning lights on.
  - turning worship music on in the background.
  - speaking to the baby.
  - touching the baby on different parts of the body.
  - touch the baby's foot or leg with a cool bottle of water.
  - burping the baby if he starts to fall asleep before the feeding should be done.

Care for newborn Tip #2- If you are feeding your baby formula (or once the mother's breast milk has 'come in'), consider structuring your baby's care-schedule in 3 hour cycles.

- Depending on your family's scheduling needs, consider having 7am be a target for a first feeding of the day. If you choose to follow a 3 hour schedule, your baby will eat at approximately 7am, 10am, 1pm, 4pm, 7pm, 10pm, 1am, 4am etc. Follow your pediatrician's feeding advice. A doctor may say to consistently feed a newborn at least every 3 hours, even throughout the night, until the baby is consistently gaining weight. A doctor may say that you can start extending or dropping some of the night time feedings if the baby is gaining weight and showing good health.
- Keeping the baby alert, during feeding time, can help ensure that the baby gets full. Getting the baby full can be important in developing a 3-hour cycle. It keeps the baby from getting too hungry too early. If the baby get's tired in the middle of the feeding, and you want the baby to feed more, take the baby off of the bottle/breast and try stimulating the baby again. If you see that the baby becomes uncomfortable in the middle of the feeding, try burping the baby before you continue.
- Once the baby has fed, consider encouraging alertness (or 'awake time') until 60-90 minutes have passed since the beginning of the feeding time. After feeding (and before sleep time) is a great time to interact with your baby. Use these times to speak words of

love over the baby. Use this time to touch your baby's hands and face. Explore the beauty of your baby's body. Let your excitement and wonder express God's delight to the baby.

- Once 60-90 minutes have passed since the beginning of a daytime feeding, start encouraging the baby to sleep. A baby should be content and ready to sleep if:
  - the baby is well-fed (not hungry).
  - the baby is tired. (meaning the baby hasn't overslept during previous hours of the day)
  - the baby's belly is comfortable (not gassy). You may have burped the baby after feeding. Consider burping the baby again before sleep to double check that there are no little air bubbles disturbing him/her.
  - the baby is not too warm or not too cold.
  - the baby is dry and clean. (check diaper)
  - the baby feels snuggled and still. (similar to the comfort he/she experienced in the womb) You can make a baby feel snuggled by holding the baby or swaddling the baby.
  - there is little or no external stimulus. To reduce external stimulus consider 1- turning off lights 2- eliminating sunlight 3- reducing or eliminating the sounds of TV, music, and voices of other people or pets.
  - the baby's body is comfortable. If you think your baby's cries might be indicating discomfort, consider removing the baby's clothing to look for sources of discomfort (i.e. a strand of mom's hair might have gotten wrapped around the baby's leg, the diaper may be on too tight, clothing might not be laying/wrapped in a comfortable way, umbilical cord might be pulled by something) One time our newborn's kicks in the car seat were hitting a hard part on a buckle and caused the baby's ankle to bleed. It's these types of things that you'll look for if you think the baby's body is uncomfortable.
  - the breastfed baby isn't affected by anything the mother has been ingesting. (caffeine, foods that may contribute to gassiness, medication) Talk to a lactation consultant if you are worried that your baby's sleep is being interrupted by something you might be ingesting.
  - (See the 10-Point Sleep Checklist on page 83)

**2- Encourage your baby to start sleeping a little bit less** during the day and **a little bit more** during the night.

To do this, interact with your baby differently at night than you do during the day.

During the day:

- Encourage your baby to stay awake, or stimulated, for up to 90 minutes after the moment you started feeding.
- If your baby was awake for a 20-30 minute feeding, encourage 30-60 minutes of awake time before you let him sleep.
- After feeding, and burping him, do things like:

- let the baby lay on his back.
- pick him up and talk/whisper face to face.
- hold him while walking and let him see lights from a window or fixture.
- hold him and pray or sing
- etc.
- Prepare your baby for sleep.
- Avoid letting your child oversleep during the day. Consider waking him up after 3 hours have passed since the beginning of the last feeding. It may be desirable to let him sleep longer (during the day) so that you can shower, rest, or finish a phone call with a friend. However, your baby may be unable to sleep as much at night if he sleeps too long during the day.

#### During the night:

- Don't play with your baby before or after nighttime feedings.
- Consider limiting what you say to him or consider not talking at all.
- Keep the lights off, or dim, during feeding and diaper changing.
- Encourage full feeding times. Remember, you may need to stimulate your baby to make sure he is awake and able to finish an entire feeding.
- Consider an extra feeding right before the night begins as a way of decreasing the chance that your baby will be hungrier later on in the night. For example, if you feed him at 10pm, feed him again before you lay him down at 11:30pm
- Consider swaddling your baby so his arms and legs are snuggled against his body.
- Once your pediatrician says it's okay to extend the time between night feedings, let your baby sleep until he wakes up hungry.

### **3- Help each other cope with stress and exhaustion.**

The combination of exhaustion and stress, that comes from caring for an infant, can easily transform you into the opposite of Radiance Parents. It can make it so that Mom and Dad are yelling at each other; blaming each other for being the cause of the baby's sleeplessness and discomfort. It can make it so that Mom is raising her voice at the baby saying, "WHY ARE YOU CRYING!?" I remember times, with both of my newborns, where I had imaginations of hitting, smacking or shaking them so that they would stop crying in the middle of the night. (Thankfully I never acted upon those imaginations.) I tell you these things to help you feel not alone if your experience of caring for a newborn isn't always dreamy and cute. It can be very raw and emotional. Realize that raw and volatile emotions are a natural consequence of the exhaustion and stress. Realize that it's okay to be exhausted and stressed. Realize that you might make mistakes in how you speak to your spouse or your baby during stressful times. Realize that Radiance Parents are also messy, imperfect parents. Realize that there are things you can do to cope with the stress and exhaustion.

Here are some coping strategies that I found helpful:

- Together with your spouse, decide that you are teammates and not enemies. Avoid blaming each other (when your baby is upset) by deciding that your baby's stressful cries are no one's fault. Decide that you will be supportive of each other no matter what happens in the middle of the night. Choose words that are encouraging, even when the baby's response to your spouse's intervention is not peaceful. Stay positive and optimistic when discussing how to respond to your baby's cries. No matter how loud the baby is, no matter how many different calming techniques you try, no matter how many mistakes a spouse makes, the baby's cry is no one's fault. Crying is normal. Stress and exhaustion are unavoidable. So decide together that you'll make this journey as fun as possible. Remind each other that you are in this together.
- Decide that you and your spouse are going to be okay with not having the immediate solution. Your child is going to have a thousand needs and it may feel stressful to not know how to care for any number of them. Relax, take a deep breath and remind yourself that **it's okay to not know how** to handle all of them right away. Give yourself room and time to grow as a parent. Use the 'Give It 2 Weeks' principle. Let's say, for example, that your baby is not going down well for one of his daytime naps. Instead of feeling immediately stressed, tell yourself, "Give It 2 Weeks." Take time to try different solutions. Take time to talk to friends and/or doctors about how they would handle the situation. Let yourself have time to learn what to do. The 'Give It 2 Weeks' principle can help reduce the amount of stress you experience when you don't know how to help your child through any particular situation.
- Each spouse should be transparent with how they are feeling. Talk often about how you feel physically, emotionally and spiritually. Verbalizing your emotions will help you and your spouse feel less stressed and more supported. If emotions go unprocessed, it can lead to additional emotional and physical exhaustion. Be in the habit of asking each other questions that allow you to explore what you feel in response to the circumstances you face. (See the sample questions on page 69)
- Try to avoid the following thought: "I hope that my baby falls asleep so that I can \_\_\_\_\_." Sometimes we want the baby to fall asleep so that we can finally rest, take a shower, be entertained, check social media...etc. Doing those things isn't wrong. But you'll be setting yourself up for frustration whenever you start wishing that the baby will do \_\_\_\_\_ so that you can get a chance to \_\_\_\_\_. You'll experience frustration because your baby is getting in the way of something you value. When you start valuing something a lot (like sleep, entertainment, a moment of quiet) you'll start getting angry at the things that get in the way. Avoid frustration by realizing that your baby IS your value. Remind yourself that this isn't your stage of life for getting lots of sleep or long showers. Remind yourself that one of your main jobs/values is your baby. These reminders will help you feel less frustrated when your baby's needs seem unending.
- When you discover that your spouse is particularly exhausted, offer to carry his/her responsibility load for a while. It could look like:
  - offering to have your spouse sleep in a different room while you handle a night feeding on your own.
  - offering to have your spouse take a walk in the middle of the day.

- suggesting that your spouse go out to Starbucks to journal how they are feeling while you try to calm a fussy baby even after he/she has been fed.
- suggesting that your spouse take a few hours in the evening to go out with friends so that his/her mind can be refreshed by taking a short break from the caring-for-a-baby routine.
- being creative. Create options for your spouse to be refreshed. A little extra help, in the middle of exhaustion, can go a long way towards encouraging and refreshing them.
- Ask for the help of friends and family. They can be a huge source of help to alleviate stress and exhaustion. Ask friends to bring prepared meals to your home. Suggest that you would be willing to do the same for them when it's their turn to have a newborn. Ask a trusted friend or family member to care for the baby during a few hours of the day. A particularly caring friend/family member may even be willing to care for your baby for one night. It's good, healthy and okay to ask for help. You may feel that you are imposing. You may feel that you should be able to handle caring for an infant on your own. Regardless of what you feel, don't hesitate to ask for help. One reason God places us in relational community is so that we can be encouraged and helped by each other.
- Whenever Mom is physically able, start taking short field trips out of the house. It can be so refreshing to change your environment. Take a slow walk around the block. Sit out on the porch. Go out for ice cream. If it's cold, take a car ride to the mall and watch people. Buy a little treat for Mom. Take pictures of each other with your newborn during your 'field trip.' These experiences will start helping you to develop special memories as a new, bigger family. Making these memories will help encourage your emotions.
- Don't forget the romance. One of the things that may be overwhelming about becoming (or being) parents is the feeling that you'll have to say goodbye to a romantic life without kids. This doesn't have to be true. Be romantic AND be parents! In the middle of the stress and exhaustion of parenting, lighten the mood by being affectionate, playful, and fun. Compliment your wife on how beautiful she is and how proud you are of her mothering. Remind each other of your covenant, wedding vows: that you'll love each other during candle light dinners AND midnight diaper changes. Do things to help each other laugh. Do things that remind your spouse that you are energetic and excited about being best friends, even throughout the baby stage.

# - CHAPTER 7 -

## CARING FOR YOUR BABY AT AGE 2-3 MONTHS

### Introduce Baby to a good leader: Part 1 - Establish healthy DAYTIME patterns

***Keep your EYES OPEN. Your 2-3 month old can experience God when you anticipate her needs and sometimes meet them before she even cries for them. Let God radiate His glory to your baby through her realization that it's YOU who care for her and your care is good and can/should be trusted.***

As your newborn grows older, and feels comfortable with your consistent pattern of caring for their every need, there are certain things that you can start doing to introduce her to the reality that God is a good leader. At age 2-3 months you'll continue to meet her needs to be cleaned, fed and rested. However, you'll **start lovingly and gently insisting on when (and how) those needs are met.**

If your infant could talk, you'd want her to say the following 'Baby Can Experience' phrases after this stage of Radiance Parenting:

- "There's someone who takes care of me. Their care for me is good."
- "There's someone who thinks about what I need. Their thoughts for me are wise and best."
- "There's someone who knows what I need. It can be nice to rest knowing that someone besides me cares for what I need."
- "There's someone who leads me through my day. I can follow their lead."
- "There's someone that I can count on to provide for what I need day in and day out."

The difference between these phrases and the 'Baby Can Experience' phrases from the previous section is very important. (If you want to know why, keep reading. If not, you can skip to the practical stuff on page 81.) The 0-6 week phrases imply that life is all about parents meeting the baby's needs. This is a RIGHT FOCUS for the **FIRST STAGE**. However, a Radiance Parent knows that **this focus will NOT be the primary focus of every stage of a child's upbringing**. As a child grows, it's vital to increasingly structure her life in a way that

allows her to learn that 1) she's not the center of the universe and 2) the center of universe is strong, loving and good.

This stuff is HUGE because it's a change of focus that will help your child experience the chart on page 35 and not the chart on page 37) It increases the chances that your child will eventually be able to say things like:

- I can rest easier knowing that God will take care of my needs.
- I don't need to be a stressed individual; overly concerned with what I need.
- I can be a restful, peaceful individual because I get used to trusting that God knows the next thing that I need.
- I like the way that God leads me.

As children grow older it's increasingly unhealthy for them to have a self-centered perspective of life. The sad thing is that many adults never grow out of it. An "it's all about me" perspective...

- ...drives the habits of a porn addict.
- ...makes a man willing to leave his wife because he doesn't feel fulfilled in his marriage.
- ...makes a teenage girl dress provocatively to get the attention she craves.
- causes some men who over-prioritize work to the neglect of their families.
- motivates an adult would give up on following God because God hasn't made life turn out like they had hoped.

For these reasons **a Radiance Parent doesn't let children forever feel that life is about having their needs met.** A Radiance Parent is passionate about rescuing their children by giving them experiences that lead to an understanding and appreciation that God (and not Self) is the center of everything.

The last point I'd like to make about this is that this shift of focus should feel like a **very gradual process** to the child. Any efforts that Radiance Parents make to introduce Baby to a God centered world should be **subtly experienced yet intentionally implemented.** I say this to avoid parents believing that once a baby turns 8 weeks old they should no longer focus their energy on caring for their baby's needs. That would be absurd. A parent should never neglect the needs of their infant because they're zealously waving the 'life-is-not-about-you-it's-about-God' banner. Although a Radiance Parent, of a 10-week old, still expends enormous amounts of energy on caring for the baby's needs, he/she can be excited to begin **gently, lovingly and tenderly** introducing the baby to the pleasurable reality that God is wonderful and He's the center of everything. Always remember that it's a process. The younger a child is the more gentle *and loving* these experiences should be. The older a child grows the more firm *and loving* these experiences should be.

It should be becoming clearer why the 'Baby Can Experience' phrases for these first two stages are different. Here they are printed side by side in case you'd like to study the differences one more time:



0-6 weeks (introduce baby to a safe life)	2-3 months (introduce baby to a good leader)
"My needs are met."	"There's someone who takes care of me. Their care for me is good."
"I'm comfortable."	"There's someone who thinks about what I need. Their thoughts for me are wise and best."
"I'm not neglected."	"There's someone who knows what I need. It can be nice to rest knowing that someone besides me cares for what I need."
"I'm consistently experiencing that life is safe and satisfying."	"There's someone who leads me through my day. I can follow their lead."
	"There's someone that I can count on to provide for what I need day in and day out."

A great way for parents to gently introduce their baby to a God-centered world is by **meeting their baby's needs in a parent-initiated way**. Parent-initiated care will feel less like 'Parent-responds-to-Baby's-cries' and more like 'Baby-responds-to-Parents'-loving-leadership.'

Here are some practical ways to make the shift:

**1- Anticipate your baby's needs as much as possible.** Make it so that you provide what your baby needs before she even realizes she needs it. Regular, 3-hour Feed-Play-Rest Cycles (similar to the one delineated on page 55) can help parents accomplish this.

- During the day, try to keep your baby well fed by consistently having her feed every 3 hours. Avoid letting your baby sleep through daytime feedings. Gently insist that she eats by waking her up when it's feeding time. (She shouldn't have to sleep longer than 90 minutes during the day, unless your doctor says it's necessary). Have everything ready for feeding before you wake your baby up so she doesn't even have to cry before she feeds. Avoid letting her fall asleep before a daytime feeding is over. Gently stimulate a sleepy baby during feeding time to ensure that she has fed long enough to get full.
- During the day, try to keep your baby active after feeding times. Encourage a *pleasant* 30-60 minute play time in between feeding and nap time. Be proactive about what happens during play time so that she doesn't start crying unnecessarily when she starts getting sleepy. If you put the baby on her back under a mobile, do this immediately after she has been fed, burped and changed. Your baby may tend to be content laying on her back only when she is *not* hungry and *not* tired. You may notice that a well-fed baby will tend to lay more still during playtime. As a baby get's hungrier and more tired sometimes her movements will start to get more rapid and hectic. These may be signs

that she is getting tired. Before she starts to cry, pick her up or transition her to another playtime activity. Consider having a 'lap time.' Speak to your baby. Look into her eyes. Play games. Massage or tickle her. As your baby gets even more tired, she may become unable to pleasantly focus during lap time or face time. If you'd still like the baby to stay awake for a few more minutes, you may have to hold her while you walk or bounce around the room. When the 30-60 minute play time is done then put her to sleep.

- If the baby begins to wake up from a daytime nap before the next feeding, encourage sleep. (Side note: if your baby wakes up from naps consistently, and you're not sure why, she may be experiencing a growth spurt. In this case, allow her to wake up early from daytime naps because she will require extra feedings. Once the growth spurt is done you can transition back to regular 3-hour Feed-Play-Rest cycles.) For more on growth spurts, scan the qr code.



By following a Feed-Play-Rest schedule, you can anticipate your baby's needs before she has a chance to cry for them to be met. Routines can also help a baby feel more comfortable in life and encourage less crying. A consistent routine helps babies begin to know what happens next in life. Consider putting the baby down for a nap by repeating the same pre-nap-time procedures. You may notice that, as you sing the same song to a sleepy baby, she will yawn at the sound of the song. This is a good sign that your baby is learning your cues. Your song becomes a signal that tells your baby that it's time to sleep. Isn't that amazing!! When you experience these types of things you know you've started transitioning more towards a Parent-Led-Home rather than a Baby's-Cries-Led home.

A Feed-Play-Rest cycle tells the baby, "This is when you eat," and avoids the baby learning, "I get fed when I cry." (Remember: "You eat when you cry," may seem acceptable at age 6 weeks. However, "You eat when you cry," will be very unacceptable at age 6 years.) A regular cycle also tells the baby, "This is how long it would be good for you to rest during the day," and avoids the baby learning, "I'll sleep and wake up whenever it feels good to me, regardless of whether it's day or night time." Letting the baby sleep says: "Whatever you naturally do or want is fine for the schedule of our family." (Remember: "Whatever you naturally do/want," may be acceptable at age 10 weeks. However, "Whatever you want," will be very unacceptable at age 10 years.)

These principles are helpful to keep in mind so that you can start, from a young age, leading your children. Remember, the younger a child is the more gentle your leadership can be. However, as the child grows older, your leadership should be increasingly firm (in an environment of love). Life is best for a child when they are led; just like life is best for an adult when they are under God's leadership.

**2- Start training your baby to stop crying before you provide what she wants.** Try to give your baby what she wants when she's NOT crying. For example, sometimes your baby will start crying when you interrupt her feeding to burp her. Demonstrate that you want to fulfill her needs but that you want to fulfill them when she's not crying. Continue burping her and then try to give her more food only when fussing or crying has stopped. Try to avoid calming her with the reintroduction of milk/formula. Instead, try distracting the baby or sushing the baby. As soon as the baby's cry has stopped, (even if it's for only a moment) offer the bottle or breast again. This type of pattern, if it is consistent, will help a baby learn that she doesn't have to cry to get what she wants. She can count on Mom and Dad to give her what she needs.

**3- Start verbally reassuring your baby that you are a good, thoughtful and loving leader.** Whenever you can, talk to your baby about the way that you are. When you start to feed your baby, tell her, "Mommy's here. Mommy gives you good things. Mommy takes care of you." When your baby cries, during burp time, say, "It's okay. Daddy knows what you need. Daddy does good things for you." This pattern of speaking about your character will help your child start knowing who you are. You are Mommy. You are Daddy. Make sure that you say the words Mommy and Daddy a lot. Then associate the words Mommy and Daddy with experiences that assure your baby that you're a good, thoughtful and thorough care-giver. Your consistent verbal reassurance will help her start developing a trust in you. She will learn to trust that someone takes care of her and that their care is good.

**4- Become confident that you know when your baby should sleep.** Sometimes it's difficult to know what to do when your baby is crying, especially when you think your baby should be able to sleep. Start developing a confidence in knowing when you can put your baby down to sleep by following the **10 Point Sleep Principle**:

- Generally your infant needs '10 points' (from the chart below) in order to sleep.
- Add or subtract sleep points based on which elements of the chart are true about your baby at a given moment.
- If she has 10 points or more, be confident that she can sleep. Lean towards insisting that she sleep rather than picking her up to rock her to sleep.
- If some circumstances are outside of your control and she can't get to 10 points, consider intervening with one or more of the tips found underneath the chart to encourage sleep so that she can be as alert as possible for the next feeding time.

	TIREDFNESS - My infant is a <i>little tired</i> . (She is starting to cry a bit...starting to stay less still and content. She might be able to lay on the ground for a short while without crying.) <b>1 point</b>
	TIREDFNESS - My infant is <i>tired</i> . (She's consistently fussy unless being held, bounced and shushed.) <b>3 points</b>

	TIREDFNESS - My infant is <i>overly exhausted</i> . She's gone through a few cycles without getting the amount of sleep she usually gets. (This is usually caused by a physical issue that causes discomfort (i.e. reflux, upset stomach, diarrhea, runny nose, cough, stuffy nose, pain after receiving vaccine administration, etc) My infant is generally inconsolable even when held and rocked and shushed) <b>1 point</b>
	TIREDFNESS - My infant is <i>not tired</i> . (She has been sleeping most of the day. She is awake and alert with eyes open. She kicks around happily when laid on her back on a blanket.) <b>MINUS 5 points.</b>
	FEEDING - My infant has been fed and was satisfied within the last 90 minutes. <b>2 points</b>
	FEEDING - My infant has been having a hard time during feedings the whole day. (i.e. She hasn't finished her feedings. She looks uncomfortable during feedings.) <b>MINUS 3 points</b>
	GAS - My infant has been burped and is not bothered by gas. <b>1 point</b>
	GAS - My infant has been fussy and it seems like she might have gas non-burp related gas. (Hint: Try pumping legs up to belly/chest until your baby passes gas.) <b>MINUS 3 points</b>
	COMFORT - My infant's diaper is clean and dry. <b>1 point</b>
	COMFORT - My infant's body is free of clothing and objects that might cause discomfort or pain. <b>1 point</b>
	COMFORT - The temperature in the room is ideal. My baby is appropriately clothed (She's not over-clothed or under-clothed so as to induce discomfort from non-ideal body temperature.) <b>1 point</b>
	COMFORT - My baby feels snug. (She's swaddled or held so that legs and arms feel secure.) <b>1 point</b>
	STIMULUS - The baby's environment is peaceful and in the last 15 minutes has been free of loud sounds and visual stimulus that might cause discomfort. (i.e. TV, movies, loud music, crowd or room full of loud laughing people, room with kids that are loud.) Also, my breastfed baby is not being affected by caffeine, medication, drugs, smoke that Mom has induced through food, drink or medication. <b>1 point</b>
	STIMULUS - Something is overstimulating my baby. <b>MINUS 1-3 points</b> (Minus 1-2 depending on severity of auditory stimulus. Minus 1-3 depending on type of substance stimulus.)

Here are some things you can try if you know your baby needs sleep but she can't get to 10 points for one reason or another. (Keep in mind that the further she is from 10 sleep points the more challenging it will be to encourage sleep through any of the methods below.)

- Hold the baby's body, arms and legs snug against your body while walking/bouncing.
- Elevate the baby's head. (for baby dealing with reflux)
- Take the baby to a dim room away from noise and distractions. (for an over-stimulated baby)
- 'Shush' the baby with soft whispers.
- Distract the baby with repeated and recognizable words/syllables. (i.e. 'ma - ma', 'da-da', 'ba-ba')
- Introduce a pacifier.
- Swaddle the baby.
- Use a noise maker or sound machine to eliminate extra background noise.
- Allow the baby an extra feeding in case the baby is experiencing a growth spurt.
- etc

It can be very tiring and emotional to care for an infant. If you feel tired, stressed, emotional, frustrated, angry, guilty...remember it's normal. (See page 76 for tips on how to cope with these experiences.) In the middle of your stress, you can encourage yourself by remembering that the way you are caring for your infant is declaring things to them about God. You are setting your infant on a path not only to know God but to know that His leadership is good, best and should be followed. So much of your infant's future will be better if she can start feeling, now, what it's like to trust another to care for her needs. You are doing things that will affect generations!

# - CHAPTER 7 -

## CARING FOR YOUR BABY AT AGE 3-6 MONTHS

**Introduce Baby to a good leader. Part 2 - Establish healthy NIGHTTIME patterns**

***Keep your EYES OPEN. Your 3-6 month old can even experience what God is like through the way you put him to sleep at night. Let God radiate His glory to your baby through his realization that your care is good and can/should be trusted; even at night.***

If your infant could talk, you'd want him to say the following 'Baby Can Experience' phrases after this stage of Radiance Parenting.

- Mom/Dad is the leader.
- I am not the leader.
- Mom/Dad will take care of everything I need.
- Since Mom/Dad is my good leader, I don't need to be the primary thinker/worrier about my life and what I need.
- Mom/Dad is aware of my needs and bringing good into my life.
- Mom/Dad loves me and listens to my cries. When I cry, Mom/Dad is close by. But my cries do not determine the way that Mom/Dad leads me and interacts with me.  
Mom's/Dad's wisdom and good leadership determines the way that she/he leads me and interacts with me.

One way you can allow your growing baby to experience this is through sleep training. A baby who is well fed, healthy, and clean can start learning to sleep throughout the night. It's good to teach a baby to fall asleep without having to be held or rocked to sleep. It's good to teach a baby to start dropping some (and then all) of the nighttime feedings. All of these are ways that a parent can ***continue the gradual process of introducing a baby to a God-centered world.***

Here are some practical tips that helped me sleep train my children:

### **1- Make sure your baby is ready for sleep.**

- Your baby **MUST BE TIRED**. If your baby has gotten too much sleep during the day, your sleep training journey will be difficult. Be thoughtful about how many naps you

allow your child to take during the day. Be thoughtful about how long you let your child sleep during their nap time. If your baby is still on a 3 hour Feed-Play-Rest cycle during the day, do not allow your child sleep for more than 90 minutes at a time. (The length of a daytime nap may increase when the time in between daytime feedings increases and the amount of daytime feedings decreases.)

- Make sure your baby's diaper is clean.
- Make sure the baby is burped.
- Make sure the baby is full. (It may be helpful to allow the baby an extra feeding right before you put him down for the night.)
- Check the 10 Point Sleep chart (page 83) to ensure that your baby is comfortable enough for sleep.

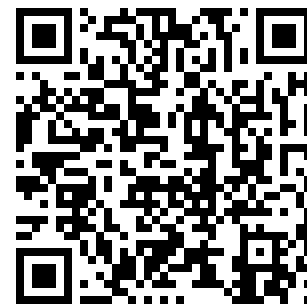
**2-** Once your baby is ready for sleep, **pick a time when you have the energy and space** in your schedule to ensure a successful sleep training. Pick a time when you won't be distracted or preoccupied by other things.

### **3- Develop a consistent bedtime routine.**

- A bedtime routine will give your baby cues that it's time for sleep. If the cues are repeated consistently enough, it will make it easier for him to fall asleep.
- Encourage peacefulness by eliminating stimuli at the end of the day.
- Encourage rest by singing, praying, whispering and/or 'shushing' a baby right before you put him into his crib.
- Watch his body language to see if he is slowing down. Is he peacefully still or energetically moving? Are his eyes looking all around or is his head resting on your arm or shoulder? Is he loud or quiet? Are his eyes alert or starting to droop?
- When your baby is still awake (but mostly still, resting, quiet and droopy-eyed), put him down in the crib.
- After you lay him down, avoid leaving the room immediately. This will avoid your baby learning that being in bed means Mom or Dad will leave me.
- Encourage your baby to be still and peaceful, while laying in bed, by continuing your song/lullaby.
- Then, when he is still awake (but droopy-eyed), start saying a phrase that you'll repeat over and over again when it's time for you to leave. Say something like, "Daddy loves you. It's time for sleep." Repeat the phrase several times while you are looking at him. Then, just before you leave, consider saying, "nigh-night." As soon as you say, "nigh-night," leave your baby with a smile on your face and exit the room. If your baby stays quiet and falls asleep --- Great! Repeat these steps the following night.

**4-** If the baby starts crying when you leave the room --- no problem. **Sleep training may take effort.** Continue with your resolve to teach and lead your child well. Declare over the child, through your loving leadership, that it's best when God is in control. Life is best when God is the leader. Help prepare the child to experience a lifetime of realizing that doing what God wants is enjoyable.

- Step 1 - Wait 3-4 minutes before you go back into your baby's room. (Note: the timing is not an exact science/recipe for sleep. Look into other time suggestions by scanning the qr code. With whatever time interval you choose, I do (however) recommend that you time it on a watch because its hard to wait that long when your baby is crying.)
- Step 2 - Go back into the room and reassure your baby. Say something like, "It's okay. Time for sleep. Good boy. Nigh-night." Leave the room again.
- Step 3 - Wait another 4 minutes.
- Step 4 - Return to your baby and pick him up.
- Step 5 - Do a quick check of the 10 Point Sleep chart. (i.e. check to see if your baby is burped, diaper is clean, etc.) If he has 10 Sleep points or more, calm him down again with parts or all of your bedtime routine. Put your baby back down, and say, "Nigh-night," before you leave. If he does *not* have 10 sleep points, get his sleep points back up by caring for whatever needs he has (i.e. diaper change, burp, check for clothing that's too tight, checking to see if the baby is sweating or if the body temperature feels too cold, etc.) Once your baby has 10 Sleep Points, repeat elements of your bedtime routine to calm him before you lay him down again. Exit the room.
- Step 6 - Wait 7 mins.
- Step 7 - If your baby is still crying after 7 minutes of watch-timed waiting, repeat steps 4 and 5.
- Step 8 - Wait a full 10 minutes.
- Step 9 - If your baby is still crying in bed, after 10 minutes: 1- return and pick him up 2- do a 10 Point Sleep Check 3- put him down on the bed and pat him for a while with 'shushing'. Stay with him until he falls asleep. (Avoid taking him back out of the room to let him play or stay up longer.) Sometimes when the baby becomes over-emotional and overtired it will be hard for him to fall asleep. If this happens, it's okay to pat pat him to sleep (**while he's in his bed**) and try the sleep training again the next day or nap time.



If at any point, in the steps above, your child falls asleep --- great! Do the same exact thing during next nap or night time. The key is consistency, consistency, consistency. If you break the sleep training routine (by rocking the baby to sleep because you feel awful that he is crying, or by sometimes letting him come back out of his room to play) all your previous hard work will be wasted. Don't give up on sleep training unless you've been thorough and consistent with it for at least a week. If you've consistently tried sleep training and your baby consistently takes you to Step 9, consider giving it up for a while. Seek the advice of a doctor or trusted friend to see what recommendations they have. It may be that you need to try sleep training again next month.

Don't try sleep training during something like teething. If your baby is experiencing a physical or medical difficulty it may make sleep training too hard. The teething or condition may make it impossible for the baby to get 10 points on the 10 Point Sleep Check. If this is the case you



should feel okay rocking your baby to sleep until the teething or medical condition is resolved. Once it's resolved you can try again.

During sleep training, **it's important for parents NEVER to think: "I will never respond to my child that cries."** A parent needs to be mindful that there may be important reasons why a child is crying. He may be sick or teething. There may be things wrong that a parent will not know. **There are times when a parent needs to be immediately responsive to a baby's cry. Sleep training is not neglecting a child.** Sleep training rather is knowing that a healthy, well-fed, comfortable baby sometimes just does not want to be put down. Sleep training is a parent *lovingly insisting* on sleep as just one way to help teach Baby that life isn't best lived when we get our way. Life is best lived when we submit our will to God.

Sleep training can be so stressful. I remember sitting outside my infant daughter's door agonizing because of the sound of her cries. I'm glad someone told me to actually time the length of her cries on a watch because each moment felt so long. I did not want her to keep crying. My wife and I would look at each other, after **WEEKS** of sleep training, and wonder, "Will our daughter ever learn to sleep without crying herself to sleep?" When we checked on her periodically we found out that she was clean, well fed, burped etc. We just realized that she didn't enjoy being un-rocked/un-held to sleep. It was also stressful to do things like army crawl out of her room so as to avoid her seeing us as we escaped out the door. I became a tip-toeing expert; knowing which spots on our floors would create the louder or softer creeks.

Many parents decide to pick a crying baby up. It's good to pick up a crying baby if the baby is hurting, hungry, gassy, teething etc. But if the cry is an expression of unreasonable preference, then it is very sad if a parent picks the baby up. It can be the beginning of teaching the baby to manipulate and control. It can teach the baby to make a fuss if life doesn't work out the way he wants. What's even worse is that within a few weeks time, the baby can learn that if a cry doesn't change his situation, a *louder cry* will change it. (That's the beginning of parents teaching a child how to throw a tantrum.) When parents allow these patterns they set the baby on a course of learning to manipulate and control life in order to feel comfortable and get their way.

Don't get me wrong. It's vital for a baby's emotional development to learn that a parent will respond when he is in need. (That's the purpose of the 10 Point Sleep Chart!) It's vital for a parent to show love and affection to a baby. Winning preference battles, at age 6 months doesn't mean that you can't hold your infant. There are many times throughout the day that a parent can (and should) enjoy his sweetness. But a parent needs to realize that holding a cute baby is hurtful when the holding comes after inappropriate demands. Be careful about picking up your crying child (who has passed the 10 Point Sleep Test in the last 5-10 minutes) if you're thinking thoughts like:

- "He is so sweet. I just want to hold him."
- "I can't stand to hear him cry."
- "I'll pick him up anyway. He's so little."

- “I’m so frustrated that I just can’t deal with this screaming.”
- “Parents who let their baby ‘cry it out’ are mean and heartless.”
- “I know my baby is comfortable, tired and fed. He’s just crying because he NEEDS me.”

It’s important to remember that disallowing the preferences of the infant to rule the home is one of the most loving things a parent can do. Encourage yourself in the middle of the sometimes agonizing process of sleep training with the following truth:

- Your emotional and tiring work of lovingly, gently (yet firmly and consistently) opposing his will is what he needs to begin a learning process that will **increase the chances that he will avoid the following later in life:**
  - Screaming at friends and siblings when he doesn’t get to play with the toy he wants.
  - Pushing school mates that won’t let him play.
  - Pouting when Dad says that it’s time to stop playing and to help with the chores.
  - Getting passive aggressive when parents don’t let him go out with a certain group of friends.
  - Divorcing his future wife when married life doesn’t feel the way he thought it would feel.
  - Not be able to keep a job because he doesn’t want to do the hard work that’s necessary to stay hired.

There is a connection between what you do with sleep training and these childhood, teenage and adult realities. Sleep training is more than just helping your child sleep better at night. It’s a part of saving them from a pattern of thinking that life needs to feel good to them or that life needs to go their way. It’s helping them to see the truth that life is most enjoyable when we choose God’s way over our way. Human beings will live more fulfilled lives when we let go of our values and ask that God would fill us with a love and desire for His values. Knowing God and following Him allows an individual to experience the highest quality of enjoyment and pleasure in life. Increase the chance that your child will grow up to be fulfilled and satisfied; create a pattern in your home where your child’s will is bent towards yours in a loving, affectionate and firm environment.

Think of parenting as jungle-path-clearing. If you teach your child that life is about having their unreasonable and self-focused desires fulfilled, their future path will be marked by struggle and entanglement. But if you give your child hundreds of chances to feel what it’s like to bend his will towards the will of another, you’ll be chopping out a clear and unobstructed path where he can run and thrive in his pursuit of God. Your efforts won’t ensure that he’ll stay on the path you’ve cut out for him. He may dive back into an entangled jungle. But at least he’ll have a greater chance of experiencing the delight of following God on the clear path you’ve cut out.

# - CHAPTER 7 -

## CARING FOR YOUR BABY AT AGE 6-12 MONTHS

**Introduce Baby to a good leader: Part 3 - Establish healthy 'eating-solid-food' patterns.**

\*Check with your pediatrician and follow his/her advice regarding when to start introducing solid food.

***Keep your EYES OPEN. Your 6-12 month old can even experience God through the way you LEAD WELL at mealtimes. Let God radiate His glory to your baby through her realization that your leadership is good and can/should be followed; even at mealtimes.***

If your infant could talk, you'd want her to say the following 'Baby Can Experience' phrases after this stage of Radiance Parenting:

- What Mom/Dad wants may be different than what I want.
- What Mom/Dad thinks is best may be different than what I think is best.
- Mom's/Dad's ways are best.
- Mom/Dad knows that there are things that are good for me even if I may not enjoy them.
- It's hard to do what I don't want to do. But it gets easier with practice.
- I'm glad Mom/Dad is willing to lead me to what's better and not just lead me based on my desires.
- Life works out better when I follow Mom's/Dad's ways.

It's very cute to see a baby first interact with solid foods. Her facial responses to new tastes and textures are hilarious. It's fascinating to realize that she doesn't even have the skill to move her tongue to keep food in her mouth and swallow it. You can really get a laugh out of watching inexperienced family members try to spoon food into a distracted baby's mouth.

It's also very easy for an infant to strongly express opinions when it comes to food and mealtimes. She may spit out food or prefer to put her hands in food rather than her food in her mouth. She may like to play with Gerber puffs like she enjoys playing with toys. Mealtimes can quickly turn into throwing food times or enjoying a game of 'make daddy pick up my cup.' An

infant's first meals may be times when she comes up with new faces; particularly the 'I'm not even going to let you put that green stuff in my mouth' face.

What makes these times even more challenging is that there may be lots of things happening at meal times. Dad is racing to get food on the table. There are other children that need attention. Mom is just getting back from work and needing to change and put the work day behind her. It's hard to balance all these things in addition to addressing the game-playing, face-making, Cheerio-throwing antics of the infant.

### **How can a parent radiate God's glory and proclaim God's voice over an infant that needs to learn food and table manners?**

First, realize that **God wants to use mealtimes**. Realize that mealtimes don't need to be simply about nourishing a child. Mealtimes are times that children can learn to submit their desires to the desires of another. This realization will give you energy to lead during a time of day that requires a lot of intentional leadership.

When you're ready to dive into radiating God's glory to your child through her experience of Dad and Mom at mealtimes:

#### **1- Prepare in advance.**

- Set a time that everyone will sit down for the meal together.
- Decide together that meal time will be a priority; that life's busyness won't kick it out of your schedule.
- Try to have your infant experience a period of at least 20 *pleasant minutes* before meal time. If an infant has been fussy, unhappy or oppositional immediately before meal time, it's likely that those behaviors will continue right into mealtime.
- If possible, try to have those 20 pleasant minutes be minutes spent with the parent that will be doing the feeding. This may not be possible if you have lots of children or if you are a single parent. But if you can, spend those minutes together to get the infant accustomed to feeling pleasant about your company, movements, suggestions and directions. The point of all this "pleasantness" is:

#### **If you've allowed oppositional behavior *outside of mealtimes*, it's likely that your child will be oppositional towards you *during mealtimes*.**

- Before you eat, bring all the mealtime things you'll need to a spot within your reach (and outside of your baby's reach). Try to avoid leaving your baby alone to get stuff throughout the meal. Consider having available the sippie cup, bowl, spoon, all the baby food you want the baby to eat, bibs, wipes/paper towels, napkins (to quickly clean up spills or hands) and a snack/food item that is desirable to the child (so you can positively reinforce desired behavior).

- Make sure that your baby is hungry before mealtime. She will be very opposed to having things in her mouth if she isn't even wanting food.
- Make sure all the food you'll give your baby is at the appropriate temperature. Carefully check, stir and recheck food that has been microwaved to avoid burns. Bring refrigerated baby food to a temperature that might feel more attractive to your baby's lips.

## 2- During mealtime:

- Keep unessential items outside of your infant's reach (so she isn't distracted and so she doesn't have things to throw).
- Sit directly in front of your baby. It's good to be face to face.
- Let your baby see the food without allowing her to touch the food. If the food is new, this will help get her attention.
- Say happy things and repeat happy tones/expressions so that your baby feels positive about what she's looking at. Remember: a baby has no box or concept for how she should respond to green beans, pears, squash or oatmeal. This reality allows you to **create that box or concept for her**. MAKE IT A POSITIVE BOX! Let your voice convey happiness and appropriate excitement about what she's looking at for the first time.
- Consider **modeling an appropriate response** to the food when it's placed in your own mouth. When you put that food in your mouth, do it slowly and deliberately. Let your baby observe your excitement about trying something 'new'. When the food is in your mouth, make facial expressions to show that you're thinking about the food and its taste. Then, when the baby is intrigued and watching your every move, let your face, voice and tones be positive, satisfied and excited.
- Consider modeling excitement about the food a second time. The repetition will increase, in your baby, a desire to experience the same things you're experiencing.
- Say, "Now *Baby* will try some."
- Put the food in her mouth.
- Make the same facial expressions and tones you did when you were modeling a positive response to trying food. The point of this is to **pair up the food you are introducing with a positive 'box' or mental concept**. As much as you can, influence your child's newly developing opinions of food flavors by creating positive experiences with foods that are healthy for them.
- If your baby keeps food in her mouth, praise and reward her. Continue feeding in this way.
- Stop feeding your baby before she loses interest in the experience. Help your baby finish the mealtime experience on a positive note by ending it before she shows signs of disinterest, tiredness or frustration.
- If your baby spits out her food, discern whether the spitting is an indication of undeveloped oral fine-motor skills or is an expression of her preference not to eat that food. 1- If it's due to undeveloped fine motor skills:
  - Enjoy the process of fine motor development.

- Laugh with your baby, and with your spouse, as you enjoy the cuteness of her not being able to keep food in her mouth.
- Keep practicing.
- Keep the experience positive. Helping your baby have a positive mealtime experience will help her look forward to the next feeding session.
- 2- If it's due to not wanting to ingest that food item:
  - Say, "Keep it in," *with a big smile on your face*.
  - Say, "Look...Daddy eats it." (Put it in your mouth and say, "Yum!" or, "Yay!")
  - Say, "Try again." Put the food back in her mouth and immediately praise if she doesn't spit it out.
  - Try this 1-3 times. If it seems that your baby is keeping the food in her mouth, but you can tell that she doesn't like the experience, give her a break. Reward her.
  - After the reward break, try the process again. You may need to model enjoying the food yourself, giving yourself verbal praise for keeping the food in your mouth. It can be helpful for your baby can see how positive the experience is for you. Then reintroduce the food to her and follow with praise if she doesn't spit it out.
- If your baby repeatedly struggles to eat a certain food:
  - Try to be consistent. Keep insisting and reintroducing the food. Don't give up right away. Someone told me some babies need to experience a food 10 times or more in order to start accepting it. (My daughters hated avocado at first, but now it's one of their favorite vegetables because we've made them eat it so much.)
  - Try distracting her. Instead of focusing on the food, make a story, song or game the focus of the high-chair experience. If she's effectively distracted you may be able to slip the food into her mouth without her realizing it.
  - Try giving a positive reward for willingness to eat something undesirable. Follow undesirable food with a bite of desirable food.

Don't be discouraged if your baby doesn't respond well to certain foods. The important thing is not to give up. ***Don't allow her to just eat the one or two things she likes.*** Keep giving her chances to practice eating something she might not prefer. Give her those chances at the beginning of the feeding time when she's the hungriest. If she's eaten 2-4 bites of something that's difficult for her to ingest, you can move on to feeding her something more desirable. Your consistent insistence at trying a variety of healthy foods will pay off in the long run.

### **3- Make mealtime parent-led and not kid-led.**

- It's good to have an expectation that your infant will behave in appropriate ways. Of course she won't have perfect table manners. However, you can do things to make mealtimes pleasant rather than disastrous. Avoid saying things like, "Oh well. This is how mealtimes will be from now on."

- It's okay to tell your baby not to touch food that's not finger food. If you want, an infant CAN be trained not to touch food with her hands. Sometimes, if our infant would do something inappropriate with her hands, we would hold them together with one of our hands.
- Insist that she eats the foods that you introduce (by following the steps above).
- Insist that mealtime NOT be play time. Teach them that there's a difference between what they do with toys and what they should do with food and drink. Consider expecting that your baby will leave toys behind when it's time to eat. Train your infant to not play with her food and drink. When she gets older you can say things like, "This is for eating and not for playing."
- Have expectations for the volume level of your baby's voice. If she's too loud, turn her high-chair around or put it in an adjacent room until she stops crying. If your baby cries for more than a minute or 2, go to her and gently coach her to stop crying before returning her to the table to finish her feeding. You may need to repeat this process several times throughout the meal.

In order to lead a child well through mealtime it's important to draw right conclusions about the things that typically happen. Consider some of these typical examples:

- **A 6-month-old uses her tongue to move Gerber oatmeal out of her mouth.** It may be easy to conclude that this means she doesn't like it. Be careful. It could be the way your baby's saying, "I don't know how to move the food from my lips to the back of my mouth for swallowing." Your conclusion could be the difference between whether you give up on introducing oatmeal or consistently give your baby needed practice with solid foods.
- **A baby's face seems to say, "I'm not sure I like this."** It may be easy to conclude that she doesn't like green colored foods for instance. Be careful. It could be the way your baby's saying, "I have never experienced anything like this before. I'm not sure what I think about it." Your conclusion could be the difference between whether you give up on believing that your child will eat vegetables or giving her enough experiences with them in order to become accepting of their flavor and texture.
- **A two-year-old rejects avocado by saying, "I no like it."** It may be easy to take her words at face value and conclude that avocados taste disgusting to her. Be careful. It could only mean that she doesn't like it as much as ice cream, crackers, chocolate or lollipops. It's likely that a baby thinks, "I LIKE foods that taste the best and I DON'T LIKE foods that don't taste as good as the best ones." This type of thinking will cause a toddler to say that they don't like avocado. In this case, a parent should say, "It's not that you don't like avocado. You're just saying that you don't like it as much as ice cream. It's not good to eat only your favorite things. We eat your favorite things A LITTLE and we eat them *after* you've eaten some healthy foods. If you don't like avocado: oh well. It's okay. I don't like avocado either but I still eat it. I eat it because it's good for me."

An interesting realization that I've had as a dad is that an infant is born with no opinions, interpretations, conceptions or boxes for what life is like. An adult might think that vegetables = yucky or dessert = yummy or darkness = scary. However, an infant hasn't had enough life experiences to inform them of what to think about vegetables, dessert and darkness. The implication of this realization on my parenting has been profound. I get to inform or influence the opinions my child has about pretty much everything in life. I can help her learn that peas = yummy and darkness = positive. I can shape her experiences in order to influence her towards healthy conclusions about life's circumstances.

I can actually save my daughter from a lot of the emotional difficulties that many adults experience due to unhealthy conclusions about life's situations. Some adults think that:

1. Darkness is scary.
2. Solitude is unsettling.
3. Grown up women are only pretty when they're wearing makeup.
4. Success is the accumulation of material possession.
5. A woman is loved, or emotionally safe, only if she has a man in her life. If a woman doesn't have a man in her life she isn't loved.
6. Rest equals relaxing on the weekend or being on vacation.

Consider the implications of having these wrong conclusions:

1. "I won't/can't walk around in a dark place without being scared, nervous or paranoid."
2. "I'm fine if I'm in a house with family or friends. I'm scared if I'm in that same house without anyone around."
3. "I spend unhealthy amounts of time and money because I've learned that pretty = glamorous makeup/fashion. I'm nervous every time I see another woman, wondering if I'm pretty compared to her. I hate certain woman because the way they dress makes me feel ugly or fat."
4. "I overwork to get enough money. My life is misprioritized. My children are emotionally unhealthy because I'm not home enough to teach them how to respond well to what they face in life."
5. "Before I was married I gave myself, in unhealthy ways, to men. My heart was broken many times by men. I'm married now but I'm afraid that I won't be good enough for my husband to stay attracted to me."
6. "I love Fridays and I get depressed on Sunday evenings."

Our conceptions (and sometimes subconscious beliefs) have radical effects on the way we live life. Sometimes we don't even know why we believe the things we do. Who even said that darkness is scary or that prettiness equals fashionable? Is darkness only scary because there's anxiety producing music played in the background of a dark movie scene? Does prettiness only equal fashionable because clothing/makeup companies realized it's the easiest way to convince women to spend their money at department stores?



Without realizing it, we transfer (to our children and others) the unhealthy opinions, values, boxes, priorities and conclusions that we've acquired from media, magazines, ads and the people around us. Parents should try to pass on the opinions, values and conclusions that are good, according to God. Don't tell your child that darkness is scary. Give them experiences in dark places that help them conclude that darkness is comfortable and non-threatening. If they do end up concluding that darkness is scary, encourage them that God is in light places AND in dark places. Tell them that God is everywhere and that God is safe. Teach them right ways of responding to things. Avoid teaching them the things you've grown up thinking about darkness, beauty, rest, success and even vegetables.

# - CHAPTER 8 -

## RADIANCE PARENTING A TODDLER (INTRO)

We've come to a turning point in Part 2 of this book. We're leaving "practical ideas for parenting an infant" and moving into, "how in the WORLD am I supposed to raise this TODDLER that God has brought into my life!?" It's that stage of life in which we parents might say, "Who's the GENIUS that decided to coin the term 'TODDLER' for this stage?! If I were the one in charge, 'TODDLER' would be like the LAST thing I'd think to call my kid! 'TODDLER'??? That is WAY too subtle. 'WRECKING BALL' is more like it! That's, at least, what MY child does to my house everyday!"

Anyway, to start, I'll share a few general thoughts I have about toddlers. Then I'll get into the detailed, practical stuff on page 106.

When our first daughter was an infant, lots of people would say, "She's so sweet. But just wait 'til she's two. They don't call them 'The Terrible Two's' for nothing!" Sometimes I would respond by saying, "Wow. I can't imagine because I already feel like we've hit the terrible ONES!"

Personally, I try to be very careful when it comes to labeling a child. Parents label their children when they say things like:

- "My boy is so rambunctious."
- "My child is not a good sleeper."
- "My child is so energetic."
- "My child is shy."
- "My child can't obey."
- "My child must have ADHD."

I get very sad when I hear adults labeling children with phrases like these.

***As parents we need to NOT look to our children's behavior to understand 'who they are' or 'what they're like'. We need to know what their Creator says about them.***

Before the foundation of the world God knew your child. He has plans for your child. He knit together your child's physical and emotional design. He chose that your child would have particular and beautiful personality traits. However, many times we don't even ask God things like, "What is my child like according to the design YOU'VE placed on them?" or, "Who have you made my child to be?"

Imagine if God made a young boy to be a passionate, energetic leader on a mission field in Cambodia during his adult life. How could he ever realize his potential if adults label him in the following ways:

- When the young boy is 2 years old, his energy is obnoxious to his mom. She says things like, "Can't you just slow down. You are giving me a headache."
- His dad doesn't know how to bring him under the authority of his voice. He says things like, "Everyone thinks that you're a bad kid when you act this way. Stop misbehaving!"
- The Sunday school teacher tells his parents (while he's listening), "Your son is unruly and aggressive."

These labels will carve out a negative path for his future. It won't be a path that is in agreement with God's plan. If a mom and dad aren't the ones in agreement with God's heart for the future of their son, who will? Parents: AVOID LABELS AT ALL COSTS. No matter how energetic or rambunctious your child is, don't say things that aren't in alignment with God's feelings for him. Don't make conclusions that lower your expectations for his behavior. Expect that he can thrive. Train your child. Show your child that it's good, best and happy to submit his energetic will to the will of the parent. Train him day in and day out. When you don't know how to lead your child through a particular behavioral issue, ask for help. When a neighbor or a fellow church goer says, "Your child sure is unruly!" Tell them to **SHUT UP!** (Oops. Well, it might be better to phrase your sentences differently. But the point is: Let your words and actions be in agreement with the plans God has dreamed of for your son or daughter. Don't let yourselves or others mislabel the displayed behavior of your children.)

It's important to talk about labeling as we dive into content about an age people refer to as 'The Terrible Twos'. What if God doesn't label this age as the terrible twos? What if God labels this age as: "it's the optimal time to be rescued from a broken life of self-gratification and self-centered living?" What if God's opinion about 2-3 year olds is that they have the capacity to learn the joy of living for, and submitting to, the will of another?

There's so much a toddler can learn about God through their encounters with you at this stage of their lives. Below is a list (not comprehensive) that will help you learn how to keep your Radiance Parenting **EYES OPEN**. It will help you discern when the Holy Spirit is providing an opportunity for your toddler to experience what God is like through his encounters with you.

Keep your <b>EYES OPEN</b> . When you give your toddler the experience of _____...	...the Holy Spirit may be using you to tell him that:
physical affection verbal affection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God's love is a shelter for you.</li> <li>● God speaks words of love to you.</li> <li>● you need God's love.</li> <li>● acceptance and contentment, peace and settledness can be found in God's love.</li> </ul>
getting picked up when he falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God is present in times of trouble.</li> <li>● God comes to your rescue.</li> <li>● God saves you.</li> </ul>
getting washed, bathed or cleaned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God makes you clean.</li> <li>● God takes care of you.</li> </ul>
laughter, games, chasing, tickling and fun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God is fun, delightful and enjoyable.</li> <li>● being with God is good.</li> <li>● where God is there's joy.</li> </ul>
receiving instruction and firm, loving leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God has wisdom, opinions and ideas about the way life should work.</li> <li>● God is moving in a certain direction.</li> <li>● God has an agenda.</li> <li>● God wants you to move in the direction of his agenda and goals.</li> </ul>
receiving warnings and admonition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God knows what's best.</li> <li>● God will shelter and shield me from harm.</li> </ul>
receiving clear expectations for behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God's will isn't surprising or hard to know.</li> <li>● you don't have to be afraid of getting blindsided or surprised by God's anger or displeasure.</li> <li>● God isn't secretive about what He wants from you.</li> </ul>
receiving consistent, anticipated, and appropriate consequences for behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● doing what God says is serious.</li> <li>● God's voice is serious.</li> <li>● following God is a matter of spiritual and emotional life or death.</li> <li>● God is clear about what happens to you, and others, if you disobey.</li> </ul>
having playtime with Mom or Dad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God enjoys you as you enjoy things.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God is interested in the things that you like.</li> <li>● God pays attention to the things that fascinate you.</li> <li>● God isn't just preoccupied with His own 'life' and 'agenda.' He's willing to enter your world.</li> </ul>
a high standard for using kind words in the home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God likes kindness.</li> <li>● God's thoughts about how relationships should be done is good and leads to peace.</li> </ul>
having his questions answered and hearing explanations of how things work in life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God knows everything about life and how it works.</li> <li>● God is a good teacher.</li> </ul>
being trained and expected to go to Dad and Mom when they call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God thinks/knows it's important to obey the sound of His voice.</li> </ul>
parents being the order-givers and children are the question-askers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● you are not the boss or the center of the world.</li> <li>● life isn't about using your surroundings to satisfy your needs.</li> <li>● God is the boss. He is the center.</li> </ul>
being led firmly and lovingly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● life works best when God is in control and in charge.</li> <li>● God doesn't want robotic obedience. He wants relationship with you.</li> <li>● He wants you to know that He leads lovingly.</li> <li>● if you're obeying God you're on the path to experience the most enjoyable life.</li> </ul>
a high standard for respectful verbal and behavioral responses to parental leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God wants more than your obedience. He wants your heart.</li> <li>● God wants your heart to be close to His not far. (Isaiah 29:13)</li> <li>● no matter what you feel, God's ways are the right ways.</li> <li>● you can declare with your attitude that God's ways are better.</li> </ul>
receiving orientation about what's happening next before a transition or new activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God leads you through life.</li> </ul>

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you don't have to navigate life on your own.</li> <li>• you don't have to worry yourself with what's next in life.</li> <li>• you can feel safety by being led by God. God is good at taking care of the plans.</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

I get very excited and energized when I realize that my interactions with my children can help teach them things about God. Today I met them in the driveway as they got out of the car with their mom. I sat in the grass and let them tackle me into the ground with their hugs. My youngest stayed and rested her cheek on my face, and lips, even after her older sister had gotten up. I kissed her and whispered into her ear, "Daddy loves you." It was exhilarating to give her a tangible experience of what her heavenly Father whispers over her life.

I'm thankful when the Holy Spirit reminds me that I can be intentional, rather than impatient, about the way I respond to my oldest daughter when she complains. I *do* like getting her things like a cup of water. However, I'm not such a fan of when she's in a whiny mood and asks for things in a demanding or manipulative way. I can easily get frustrated with her and say something impatient like, "Don't ask like that," or, "Is that the way we ask for things around here?" It's much better when the Holy Spirit reminds me to say something like, "Ava, I love to help you. Daddy is a good helper for you. When you need something, I like to come quick. But remember, you don't have to whine to get me to help you. All you have to do is think, 'Oh...my daddy's a good helper. He likes to help me.'" After you remember that I'm a good helper, say, "Daddy can you help me please?" In this way I can use an everyday moment to lead her towards a better understanding of what interacting with God is like.

Sometimes, when my girls get hurt, I run to them and say, "*Daddy's here. Daddy will hold you. Daddy will help you. It's okay. Daddy's here.*" The whole time I'm saying those phrases to them I pray about the experiences of hurt and need that they will have later in life. I pray that the way I run to them, when they're 2, will help them recall the way God interacts with them when they are adults. I pray that they will feel safe, even when they're in a place of hurt and need. I pray that they will feel restful knowing that a big and loving God is present and desiring to help them. I pray that they will have a conclusion about life that is rooted in the reality that God is with us in messy, hurting places.

# - CHAPTER 8 -

## RADIANCE PARENTING AND THE BLESSING OF AUTHORITY.

***Keep your EYES OPEN. Your toddler can even experience God through the way you 'do' rules in your home. Let God radiate His glory to your toddler as you enjoy her throughout the process of learning the blessing of coming under authority.***

If your toddler could articulate advanced thoughts, you'd want her to say the following 'Toddler Can Experience' phrases after this stage of Radiance Parenting. (Which will make it SO much easier to experience these things WITH GOD later in life!):

- Mom/Dad likes me and enjoys me A LOT.
- Following Mom's/Dad's ways leads to what's ultimately best.
- Disregarding Mom's/Dad's ways and choosing my own way leads to nowhere good. (This is an important point because an adult who disregards God's ways will only experience eventual danger, death, suffering and pain.)
- I will be more peaceful when I consistently come under the authority of Mom/Dad.

### **Loving And Leading: The Balancing Act**

When it comes to parenting a toddler, one thing that I give a lot of thought to is, "How can I be the Strict Boss AND the Loving Daddy? Both seem to be important. How can I be strict and STILL be loving AND how can I be loving AND still be strict?"

This chapter gives:

1. reasons for WHY both are important and
2. practical strategies for HOW to make it happen in the context of real-life parenting situations.

### **WHY should a parent...**

1. ...be energetic about ensuring that the child knows her mom/dad enjoys her?

2. ...be resolute in consistently winning the will-battles?

Sometimes lenient parents think that opposing their toddler's will makes her feel unloved. Sometimes strict parents think a long list of rules and the loud voice of the rule enforcer will help their toddler experience that authority is a blessing.

**Toddlers can't experience blessing without being under authority.  
Authority won't be a blessing unless it's experienced in the context of relational affection.**

Toddlers need to be led AND toddlers need to be enjoyed. Toddlers need to lose the will-battles AND toddlers need to be loved. A Radiance Parent's voice needs to be firm AND affectionate. A toddler needs to have times of crying, because she doesn't get her way, AND times of being held because she's wonderful.

Some parents think that it's mean to not let their toddler do what she wants. It's easy to think that if a toddler is crying that she will feel unloved. Sometimes toddlers even drop bombs (like these) in order to get their way: "Mommy you don't like me," or, "I hate you Daddy." Parents should not conclude that opposing their toddler is mean. Parents should not conclude that giving a toddler what she wants is loving. Loving and bringing your toddler under the blessing of your authority aren't two different things.

**A toddler can't flourish unless she learns that it's always best to defer to Mom and Dad's will in a context of relational affection.**

Remember: The goal of Radiance Parents is to image God to their children. We want to image that God is passionate. He feels things deeply. He is constantly doing good to those that belong to Him. He's affectionate and wants us to be with Him. He pursues our emotional hearts with great energy. He rejoices over us with singing. He seriously punishes rebellion. He hates sin. It is this kind of God that we need to know as parents. It's this image of God that we need to radiate to our toddlers through their encounters with our authority.

#### **HOW can a parent...**

1. ...practically lead a toddler well and
2. ...ensure that she knows she's loved.

Here are some principles and practical strategies that inform the way that I interact with my toddlers. (This list is just the introduction. Read pages 106 - 122 for detailed examples in everyday life.)

- **Don't expect your child to follow lots of rules at once.** Remember: they have a lot to learn. You will spend a whole life time teaching them God's feelings about how life should be lived. They only have the capacity to start learning about 1 or 2 major things



at a time. (For more on why you should have too many rules, read the last section of this chapter.)

- **Keep your rule(s) understandable.** It's okay to have a main rule or two for your 12 month old. But rules won't help them if they don't make sense. Don't say complicated things like, "I don't want you to leave the kitchen," or, "I already told you NOT to touch the iPad." Limit the explanation of your expectations to 1 or 2 comprehensible words and lots of pointing, showing, modeling, role-playing and vocal tones. (see page 112 for more examples).
- **Practice the expected behavior with your child** over and over (role play, model, talk, repeat, dolls, figurines)
- **Keep revisiting the rule.** Give your child chances to practice following your 1 or 2 big rules every day.
- **Have a clear anticipated consequence** for not following Dad's/Mom's voice.
- **Have both Mom and Dad on board** for being energetically consistent at reinforcing this rule.
- **Mix in talks and debriefs, about the rule, with a lot of hugs and affection.** Toddlers shouldn't feel that play time and obey time are two separate things. The same Dad who initiates fun play times should be the same Dad who disciplines. This will help children not to grow up thinking that 'God's rules' and 'fun times' are 2 separate things. 'God and fun and rules' and 'God and joy and consequences' are all the same thing. Because of what's true about God, Christians should be the most delighted, fulfilled, pleasure-experiencing people on the planet.
- Immediately, warmly, proudly and happily **reward compliance.**
- Consistently, quickly, relevantly, firmly, seriously and lovingly **administer the anticipated consequence for defiance**

The following section contains suggestions for how Radiance Parents can **LEAD WELL** and have their **EYES OPEN** when leading a toddler through issues like:

- coming to Mom and Dad at the sound of their voice. (Page 106)
- teaching a toddler where to go and not go in the house. (Page 112)
- how your leadership can be firm AND loving. (Page 103)
- how to avoid nagging a toddler. (Page 115)
- how to teach a toddler good manners and appropriate vs. inappropriate words. (Page 118)

# - CHAPTER 8 -

## "COME TO DADDY/MOMMY"

**How we trained our children to come to us at the sound of our voice.**

We started teaching our firstborn to come to us, in response to our verbal instruction, as soon as she could scoot/crawl. It seemed like such an important thing to do, since it's so important for adults to respond to the Holy Spirit's voice. Following the Spirit's voice allows us to know, and experience, true life. If we defy the Holy Spirit's voice we open the door for pain, darkness and evil to enter our lives. With that in mind, it seemed unthinkable for me NOT to teach my daughter to respond immediately to the sound of my voice. I thought that if I could train her to submit her will to mine (in regards to my verbal instructions) then it would be a LOT easier for her to enjoyably submit to the Holy Spirit when she started to grow older.

We taught our daughters to come to us at the sound of our voice in a few different phases.

**Phase 1** (for crawlers or babies who have just started walking)

The purpose of Phase 1 is to *help a baby learn what the phrase, "Come to Daddy/Mommy," means.*

- Clear out a big space on the floor.
- Remove every distracting item. By doing this you'll be setting yourself up for success because...
  - ...her attention can be more easily focused on you.
  - ...she no longer has access to things she wants.
  - ...you'll be the 'gate' that allows or disallows access to the things she likes.
  - ...you'll be the possessor of things that the baby desires.
- Put the baby/toddler down about 10 feet from where you are. The distance may vary depending on the child's mobility. If she can barely crawl, decrease the distance.
- Hold a desirable food item (or toy) in your hands or lap.
- Choose one phrase that you'll repeat and always be ready to reinforce with appropriate consequences. It's important to pick a phrase like, "Come to Daddy," that you'll use *every time you are serious about having your toddler come to you.* Avoid changing phrases. (i.e. don't say, "Come to Daddy," sometimes and other times say, "Come here

you little rascal!") A parent can easily confuse a toddler by doing this. Make a clear difference between 'come-to-Daddy time' and 'play-with-Daddy time'. One way you can make this clear is by using the exact same phrase every time you are SERIOUS about having the child come to you.

- Since the baby is in a large space (with nothing else to do) and since you are holding the only desirable item in sight, the baby will come when you say, "Come to Daddy." She won't be coming because she knows what "Come to Daddy means." She will come because she wants the toy/food.
- When she comes, give positive reinforcement like verbal praise.
- Repeat the steps of Phase 1 several times a day for a series weeks (depending on the age of the baby)
- Phase 1 training will allow your child to start pairing up, "Come to Daddy," with the action of crawling/scooting/walking to Daddy.
- You are teaching your child what the sounds/words, "Come to Daddy," mean.
- During phase 1, it's okay to repeat the instruction, "Come to Daddy," more than once.

**Phase 2** (For babies who have graduated from Phase 1 or for toddlers who haven't started learning to come to Mom or Dad at the sound of their voice.)

When you feel like your baby has become familiar with what you mean/want when you say, "Come to Daddy/Mommy," change the focus of your training by doing the following:

- Clear the room/area of desirable toys/objects. (It's very important that the child has no hope of accessing something desirable.)
- Set the baby/toddler about 10 feet from where you are.
- Intentionally DON'T hold something desirable. In Phase 1 the child has always come to you because you are holding something desirable. In Phase 2 you should say the same phrase but NOT HOLD ANYTHING DESIRABLE. The purpose of this is to teach the baby the difference between, "Come to Daddy," and, "Come to the only desirable toy/food that's available to you."
- While not offering any desirable toy/object, say, "Come to Daddy."
- If the child comes, reward her behavior with excited positive reinforcement (verbal praise, hugs, affection, applause)
- If the child crawls towards something else, pick her up or scoot her back to where she was when you said, "Come to Daddy." Your child may cry or protest when she feels you keeping her from crawling away. It's okay. Pick her up or move her back to the original starting location and try again.
- If the child still crawls towards something else, move them back to the starting location again. Do this until the child gets tired of getting scooted back. When she's tired enough of getting scooted back, **she will give up and finally go to Daddy.** This is VERY IMPORTANT. It's important for the child to be the one giving up. It's equally important for the parent to be the one NOT giving up. The younger the child is the easier she will give up and finally go to Daddy. Older toddlers, who have had many experiences of doing what they want (who haven't had practice doing what Mom or Dad

says) will require much more 'scoot backs' in order to finally give up and go to Daddy. Even if it takes lots of repetition, and even if there are many screams, DON'T GIVE UP. Do it patiently and gently until she gives in and comes to you at the sound of your voice.

- Praise the child when she comes to Daddy.
- Like I mentioned in Phase 1, it's important for the child to know the exact words that you'll say when you're wanting her to come to you. Be consistent! It's also important for the child to be clear on where she has to arrive in order to successfully 'Come to Daddy.' Does, "Come to Daddy," mean arriving within 1 yard of you? Does, "Come to Daddy," mean arriving within 1 foot of you? Does, "Come to Daddy," mean standing directly in front of you and looking at your eyes? I decided that I wanted to be consistent with the following expectation for my daughters: "Come to Daddy," means touching both of Daddy's outstretched hands. I don't celebrate her reaching me until she's touched both of my hands. If she comes within one foot and stalls: no celebration. She must touch both of my hands without me having to reach towards her in order to make up the space she choose to leave between us. Sometimes parents reward 'almost obedience' because they think, "This is good enough. I don't want to make a big deal about this. If I do, she might freak out. ...so this is good enough." This is a very negative pattern because 'almost obedience' (many times) is generally 'silent defiance.' 'Silent defiance' is when a child thinks thoughts like, "I don't really want to obey you. But I don't want to get in trouble either. I'll come to you, but I'll come really slowly. Or I'll come to you but I'll stop when I'm just out of your reach." When your child does things like this, she is asserting her will against yours. It will be destructive for you to ignore it or reward it. If you think your child may be silently defying you, mention it to them. Say something like, "It seems like you might be trying to disobey," and re-clarify the details of your expectation. Tell them (with details) what the difference between 'obedience' and 'almost obedience' is.
- During phase 2, intentionally try to reduce the amount of times you repeat the verbal instruction, "Come to Daddy." By Phase 3 it will be important to only tell the child ONE TIME to, "Come to Daddy/Mommy."

**Phase 3** - Introduce negative reinforcement (consequences) to a noncompliant child.

- In Phases 1 and 2 coming to Daddy has only been an experience followed by reward. In Phase 3 the child will start receiving an undesirable consequence for neglecting to do what the parent is asking her to do.
- When should a parent move to phase 3 of training?
  - ...when the child has demonstrated a consistent and definitive understanding of what, "Come to Daddy," means.
  - ...the child does not show confusion regarding what is expected of her in this situation.
  - ...the child knows that something positive will happen if she enthusiastically responds to the instruction, "Come to Daddy," by moving close enough to Daddy that she can reach out and touch both of his outstretched hands.

- In Phase 2 a child that was hesitant to come to Daddy would be put back at the starting point as many times as needed until the response to the instruction was: child moves from starting point to Daddy's outstretched hands.
- In Phase 3 *the focus is on what the child does immediately after hearing the verbal instruction, "Come to Daddy."* After hearing the instruction, does the baby immediately and energetically redirect movement towards Daddy's hands? Does the baby stop, wait and THEN move towards Daddy's hands? Does the baby move in a direction further away from the location of Daddy's hands?
- In Phase 3, I suggest introducing an undesirable consequence to the baby if she makes any movement (significant or slight) away from the location of Daddy's hands. As soon as you say, "Come to Daddy," or "Come to Mommy," if the baby moves further away from you (or turns in any direction that's not towards you), introduce an undesirable consequence.
- An undesirable consequence could be any of the following (or others) and should be chosen based on the child's age and the degree and consistency of her defiance.
  - Gently and firmly taking both of the child's hands in yours so she experiences an inability to freely walk or do what she desires. With her freedom to be mobile removed, repeat the instruction in a serious and slightly louder tone: "Daddy says, 'Come to Daddy.'"
  - Gently, firmly and slowly taking the child's head in your hands and bringing her face within 1-2 inches of yours. Hold the child's face even though she protests. With the freedom to be mobile and to look around removed, repeat the instruction in a serious and slightly louder tone: "Daddy says, 'Come to Daddy.'"
  - Gently take the child's hands in one of yours. Gently, and firmly, apply a measured, squeezing pressure to the back of the child's thigh or the side of the child's thigh. Measured means squeeze until it gets the child's attention and the child starts to nervously wonder, "What is going to happen next?" You should NOT squeeze until there are inappropriate amounts of pain; only enough to cause discomfort. To know how much pressure to apply, I squeeze only if my child is standing or sitting still (not flailing). I squeeze with my palm and all my fingers (not just two fingers). I squeeze over the span of 5 seconds moving from almost no pressure and slowly increasing the pressure while I watch my child's face to gauge what kind of effect the squeeze is having. Never apply an immediate, uncontrolled squeeze so that your child is shocked by what's happening and so that you're unable to gauge how hard your squeeze is. Right as your squeeze gets the baby's attention, repeat the instruction in a serious and slightly louder tone: "Daddy says, 'Come to daddy.'"
- After administering an appropriate and undesirable consequence, and after the instruction has been repeated in a serious tone, **return the child to the starting point** where the, "Come to Daddy," instruction was originally given. The parent giving the instruction should also return to his or her original location. Don't make the mistake of administering an appropriate consequence and then letting the child go. If a child disobeys, **don't move on to other activities until she has successfully obeyed.**

- Once the child and parent are in place, repeat the instruction.
- If the child's response is satisfactory, praise her. Sometimes it's so important to say phrases like these after she has needed an undesirable consequence to motivate compliance (and to radiate God's character):
  - "It's so important to come to Daddy."
  - "It's happy when you come to Daddy."
  - "You should come to Daddy all the time."
  - "It will be happy in our house if you learn to come to Daddy."
- If the child moves in any direction, that is not towards the location of the parent's hands, repeat the steps listed under administration of an undesirable consequence. Be consistent and repeat these steps until the child is successful at responding to your verbal instruction.
- Make sure you give your child enough 'Come To Daddy' practice. If your child only gets a chance to practice once every few days, it will not be enough to successfully train her. Your child should have the chance to practice at least once a day.
- Make sure you train your child when you have enough time to be effective. It's not a good idea to ask your child to come to your hands as you're flying out the door on your way to a doctor's appointment. 1- The child will not respond well to the rushed environment of the moment. 2- You won't have the time or undivided attention to follow through. You won't be able to administer undesirable consequences enough times to encourage your child to succeed in responding to your verbal instruction.
- The space is also important. In Phase 3 you should try to follow the space recommendations listed in Phase 1 and 2. Don't expect your child to come to you (in Phase 3) if there are lots of her favorite toys in the immediate vicinity. Don't expect your child to come to you (in Phase 3) if their favorite playmates are running wildly around them. Train your child in an environment where there is little distraction or motivation for them to move towards things besides you.
- In Phase 3 of training, the parent should only say the verbal instruction, "Come to Daddy," one time. Do *not* try to encourage the child to obey by repeating the instruction multiple times. Do *not* try to encourage the child to obey by counting backwards from 10. Say, "Come to Daddy," ONCE and then expect energetic compliance and administer undesirable consequences for noncompliance.

**Phase 4** (Start expecting your child to come even when multiple distractions are competing for her attention.)

Once your child has demonstrated consistent compliance with your, "Come to Daddy," instruction, move on to Phase 4. Start training your child to come to you, at the sound of your voice, when there are other desirable things to move towards in their immediate surroundings. Expect your child to come to you when they might have a toy next to them that they'd like to have. Expect your child to come to you when there are friends or cousins close by. Expect your child to come to you when they are in the middle of doing something fun.

How should your training be different in phase 4?

- Give your child a 'heads up' before giving the instruction.
  - Give your child preparation that you are about to tell her to come to you.
  - Tell your child that their current, fun activity is about to be done.
  - Verbally rehearse the Come-To-Daddy routine and remind them of the appropriate response.
  - Before you ask your child to come to you (and they're in the middle of one of their fun activities) it's good to be with them for a minute or two to experience what they are doing. Unfortunately, it's easy for me to forget this tip. Sometimes I might have a plan in my head while my daughter is playing a game. I'm not even watching what she's doing. If I start saying, "Come to Daddy," it could come as a shock to her and she could easily be upset. She might think, "I can't believe Daddy doesn't think these dolls are important right now." Part of her frustration is my fault. I haven't taken into account that she's in the middle of something precious and fun. In order to acknowledge to her that I value what she's doing, I should get down at her level and affirm what she's doing for a few moments. Then, when she realizes that I like what she's doing, I can give her orientation regarding the transition that's about to happen.
- Teach your child what you'd like their attitude to be like when the Come-To-Daddy instruction is given.
  - Expect that she will not be verbally oppositional. She should learn to come to you without saying, "But I don't want to." She should learn to come without crying manipulatively. She should learn to come without objectionable body language (i.e. stomping feet, folding arms, rolling eyes). She should learn to come immediately and energetically. (i.e. not tiptoeing or controlling the situation by coming at a slow or exaggerated pace) These are all examples of silent (or not so silent) defiance. ***Don't ignore them.***
  - If your child successfully comes to you, but comes to you with a wrong attitude:
    - teach her what you want different about her attitude and body language
    - ask her to repeat the process from the start, but with an honoring attitude.
  - If she consistently comes to you with dishonoring words, attitude or body language, conduct practice sessions. Practice sessions will allow her to spend extended times coming to you with a good attitude. It will show her that you value not only obedience but honor and respect. The practice sessions can occur during an activity that she would've normally enjoyed. During practice sessions remind her of how good Daddy and Mommy's leadership is. Remind her of how important it is to WANT to do what Mommy and Daddy say.
  - Once she successfully comes, reward her with verbal praise. Phase 4 praise shouldn't be exaggerated. It's okay to be overly energetic with your verbal praise in early phases. However, in Phase 4, don't exaggerate. Don't try to hope your child into obedience by bending over backwards with praise. Expect it and enforce it consistently and lovingly.

# - CHAPTER 8 -

## "OBEY MOMMY'S/DADDY'S VOICE."

**How we train our children what to touch and not touch.**

Ewwww. Hands in toilet water!

Ahhhhh! Crawling too close to the stairs!

Nooooo! Fingers exploring electrical sockets!

Child-proofing a home is a good idea. Child-proofing EVERYTHING in the home might not be the best idea. Here's what I mean:

My dad childproofed ALMOST everything in the house for me when I was a toddler. Some fragile household items he put out of reach. Dangerous things he stored away in places I could not access. However, he DID leave the stereo, with all its shiny, attractive-to-a-toddler buttons, down low enough for me to reach. His purpose was to create one or two "battlegrounds" or "training opportunities" in which I would learn to be guided not by gates and cabinet locks but by the sound of his voice and a knowledge of his rules/instructions.

Read below to find 2 step-by-step examples of how my wife and I taught our children to stay away from things we didn't want them to touch/explore. Each example contains reminders of the following 3 important Leading-A-Toddler principles: 1- Don't give too many rules 2- Make your rule/instruction comprehensible 3- Be consistent.

### **Example 1 - "Don't touch the toilet."**

Principle 1 - Remember to not have lots of do's and don'ts (depending on your child's age). Lots of do's and don'ts are frustrating and confusing for parents and their young children. This dynamic can lead to a home environment that lacks love and is overrun by anger and frustration.



Principle 2 - Remember to make your words comprehensible. Don't assume that your 12-month-old understands every word that comes out of your mouth. If you can't make an instruction comprehensible, don't expect your child to obey it.

Here's how you can make, "Don't touch the toilet," comprehensible to a 12-month-old.

- Take your child's hands in yours while you walk behind them.
- Walk them around the bathroom.
- Move their hands to touch a lot of things. Every time their hand touches something say, "Yes," in a happy voice. Have fun with them saying, "Yes. Yes. Yes," while they touch the shower curtain, the edge of the bathtub, the bathroom door, some toys in the bathroom, etc. Laugh with them while you make saying, "Yes. Yes. Yes," a fun game.
- Then, bring them to the toilet immediately after some fun yes's.
- Pause for a moment. The pause will help your child realize that this bathroom item is different from the rest.
- Dramatically say something like, "Oh. Oooooohhhh," in a serious tone. Then say a firm, serious, "NO." The sudden change of emotion, word and tone will help the 12-month-old realize that the toilet is not like the other bathroom items. She'll think, "This is a serious something." Say, "NO TOUCH."
- When you see that the seriousness has settled in, go back to the other items and say things like, "Yes. Yes. Yes," and, "Fun. Fun. Fun."
- Then go back to the toilet and say, "NO. NO TOUCH."
- Repeat the process until you feel like your 12-month-old has gotten the point.

Principle 3 - Be consistent. The first, and every, time the child touches the toilet you should administer an undesirable consequence. (see page 109) **Every time the child touches the toilet, WITHOUT getting an undesirable consequence, it will lead to increased confusion.** The child will resent your future undesirable consequences regarding the toilet if you are inconsistent. Decide together as parents that you will both enforce this and that you will both enforce this every time.

Do it joyfully knowing that it's this type of training that will increase the chances your child will experience emotional, social and spiritual blessing in the future.

### **Example 2 - "Stay close to Mommy/Daddy."**

Sometimes a parent will need their toddler to stay close to them. This may happen when:

- the family is in the living room and you don't want the toddler to go the unsupervised kitchen (or any other adjacent room).
- the family is downstairs and you don't want the toddler to go climbing upstairs.
- you're in a store and you don't want your toddler to wander.
- you want your toddler to stay in the yard and not get close to the street.

Don't forget Principle 1 - Don't constantly order your child saying, "Stay here," or, "Don't go there." Don't follow them for extended amounts of time nagging them with instructions that have no consequences. This will cause your toddler will become deaf to your voice/instruction. Instead, expect that your 12 month old can follow your verbal instruction regarding where and where not to be. Intentionally choose 1 or 2 locations to provide training. Outside of those locations (like in a grocery store, for example) limit your child's freedom to walk by holding them, putting them in a stroller/cart, making them hold your hand at all times, etc.

Principle 2 - Here's how you can make your instruction comprehensible if you are downstairs and you don't want your baby to get close to the stairs:

- Start walking your baby all around downstairs saying, "Yay. Yes. Good. Yay," etc. Have fun and laugh about all the good places she can go.
- When you get to the landing of the stairs, stop and say a firm, serious, "NO. NO STAIRS."
- Just like we discussed in the bathroom situation, go back to the acceptable areas and say, "Yay. Yes," to all the other downstairs areas where the baby is allowed to walk.
- Then return to the, "NO," area and repeat the serious and firm instruction.

Principle 3 - Be consistent. Every time the baby touches the bottom stair, administer an undesirable consequence. Both parents should be on board all the time. Avoid the urge to ignore the baby's slight acts of disobedience because you'd prefer...:

- ...not to get up from your spot in front of the TV.
- ...to continue browsing your Facebook page.
- ...to finish cleaning up the kitchen or doing the laundry.
- ...not to expend the energy to reinforce consequences on a particularly tiring day.

If you are too tired or busy to reinforce rules with consequences, have your baby do an activity that makes it impossible for them to push the limits. Prioritize consistency above what you physically or emotionally feel.

- Put them in their crib with some toys.
- Strap them in the high-chair and put them in front of a wholesome DVD.
- Call grandpa and grandma and give them cash to take your toddler out for a snack or a ride on the cars at the mall. etc)

# - CHAPTER 8 -

## HOW TO LEAD & REDIRECT WITHOUT NAGGING:

### Practical Strategies For Leading Well In The Times Outside of Examples 1 & 2

Right now you might be thinking, “Okay, Caleb, you’re saying I should only have 1 or 2 rules when my child is really young. What about the long list of important rules like:

- You’re not the electrician so don’t touch electrical sockets.
- Crayola products are for paper - not walls.
- It’s not your job to unload knives from the dishwasher.
- Books look better ON the shelves.
- Computer keyboards aren’t for pounding.
- Daddy is the only T.V. channel changer.
- Save your loudest voice for times when your baby sister is not sleeping.
- Don’t eat ant bait or drink toilet bowl cleaner.
- Other people like to talk at the dinner table besides you.
- I know they do it on WWF, but don’t hit or bite.
- Mommy doesn’t like paying library fines. Avoid tearing book pages.
- You and the tub should be wet during bathtime...not the floors or ME.

Here’s some practical advice for handling these types of situations without making your list of rules too long:

**1- Try not to say the word, “No,” too much.** “No,” can lose it’s meaning and effectiveness if a parent uses it too much. Save “No,” for emergencies or very serious infractions. (i.e. when a toddler is about to run out into the road or threatens to throw the iPad off of the table) If a toddler wants something she can’t have, instead of saying, “No,” tell her *when* she can have it (as in the examples below):

Toddler: *“I want cookie.”*

Parent: *“Cookies are yummy, aren’t they? You can have a cookie after you eat all your rice and 3 bites of avocado for dinner tonight.”*

Toddler: *"Can I watch T.V.?"*

Parent: *"You can watch T.V. for 30 minutes tomorrow morning. Right now we're going to go outside and ride your tricycle."*

**2- Redirect.** Instead of telling a toddler to stop a certain behavior, tell them what they should do instead.

Toddler is dripping water from her sippy cup onto her dinner.

Parent: *"Water is for drinking. Drink it like this and then put your cup here."*

Toddler is eating a napkin that fell off the dining room table last night.

Parent: *"This is yucky trash. Trash goes in the garbage can, not in our mouth. Come with me. Let's put it in the garbage can. Can you find anything else that should go in the garbage can?"*

**3- Distract.** Instead of telling a toddler to stop a certain behavior, give them something else to do instead.

Toddler is opening a kitchen cupboard that contains things she should not play with.

Parent: *"Here you go. Play with the tupperware in this drawer instead. This is for you. This is, 'Yes.'"*

Toddler is playing with an older sibling's favorite toy.

Parent: Give another toy/object and say, *"This is a nice toy for you to play with. Nice job playing with this."*

**4- Physically move the child's location** if she's playing with something you don't want her to play with.

**5- Child proof it.** It's good for a toddler to have chances to learn to obey the sound of your voice. However you can't teach a young toddler everything you want her to touch and not touch. A long list of rules to follow is too overwhelming. Child proof it if you don't want her to touch it and you aren't making it a training ground for learning to obey the sound of your voice. You should also childproof it if it's dangerous and can't always be supervised.

Toddler is in the habit of touching buttons on the T.V. or stereo.

Parent puts the audiovisual equipment out of reach.

Toddler learns that the cabinet under the sink can be opened.

Parent puts a snap lock on the cabinet to keep bathroom chemicals out of reach.

**6- "Say, 'Hi,' to it. Not touch."** Young toddlers like to touch almost everything they can get their hands on. It's a way they can explore and learn about their world. It's good to allow them

to explore and touch under your supervision. However if there is something that is not appropriate for a young toddler to touch, consider the, “Say, ‘Hi.’ Not Touch” principle.

Toddler wants to touch the candy at the grocery store check out aisle.

Parent: *“Oh that’s nice, isn’t it? That’s called candy. Right now we will just say, ‘Hi,’ to it. Wave. Say, ‘Hi.’ We won’t touch it we’ll just say, ‘Hi.’”*

Toddler wants to touch Grandma’s picture frame.

Parent: *“Just say, ‘Hi.’ Say, ‘Hi.’ Not touch.”*

**7- “Look at what Mommy does with this. Look at how Daddy does this. This is how Baby will do it.”** Sometimes a young toddler doesn’t know how to behave acceptably in certain places. If the toddler has never had a chance to learn the appropriate behavior, parents should never get frustrated at a baby. Instead they should teach the baby. Don’t assume that your toddler knows all the social norms that you do. Help a toddler know the right manners by helping them look at people who are exemplifying the appropriate behavior.

Toddler is at a restaurant standing up on her chair.

Parent: *“Look at Daddy. See how he’s sitting down on his chair? Look at Uncle Roger. He’s sitting down. Look at the lady over there. She’s doing a good job sitting down. You do a good job sitting down too.”*

Toddler is talking loudly during church service.

Parent: (whispers) *“See how Mommy is sitting quietly? See how Mr. Mike is sitting quietly? See how Sister is sitting quietly? Right now is a time to be quiet.”*

### **8- First this...then that.**

Toddler is having fun playing at a friend’s house and Mom knows it’s time for Toddler to get a diaper change.

Parent: *“You are doing such a good job playing. You can keep playing this after you get your diaper changed. First diaper change. Then keep playing.”*

Toddler is having fun playing and Dad knows it’s time to leave Grandma’s house and go back home.

Parent: *“First, come to Daddy. Then go in car. Then we’ll see Grandma a different day.”*

(Personal note: If you’re like me, sometimes you’ll get nervous when it’s time to give your toddler an instruction, especially when you’re in a public place. I get afraid that my child will protest or throw a fit. If I start feeling these things a lot, I tell myself that it’s time to provide my child extra chances to practice following my leadership. To do this, first, I tell her that I’m going to start having her practice because I’ve been seeing that it’s not easy for her to want to obey. Next, I pick practice times (and places) that will allow me the space for effective training.

Finally, once the practices are helping her change her attitude or patterns of behavior, I start testing her by asking her to follow my authority in other places, like outside the home or with other people around.

If I don't have time to practice, and I'm still nervous that my child might protest, I use this eighth principle.

**9- Bring Two Things.** Sometimes a child is having so much fun with a toy that it's hard for her leave it in order to obey an instruction. In this case you can try the Bring-Two-Things principle.

Toddler is playing with a doll's house. It's almost time for bath.

Parent: *"It's time for bath. Do you want to bring two things with you to play with in the bath?"*

Toddler is playing. It's almost time to go to the doctor's office.

Parent: *"It's time to go in the car. Do you want to bring two things with you? Okay, let's go."*

**10- We will do this a different time.** Use this tip when it's time to be done with a very fun activity.

Toddler has been having a blast at a cousin's house. It's time to say goodbye.

Parent: *"It's been so fun playing with your cousins. They are so special. We have so much fun playing with our cousins. We will do this a different time. Now it will be time to say goodbye, but we will come back a different time. Say, 'Bye-bye!'"*

### **Teaching your toddler appropriate vocabulary and advanced manners (age 2 and up)**

Principle 1 is don't have too many rules. How do you teach appropriate vocabulary AND *not* have so many rules?!? My children are constantly learning words that I don't want them to say. They learn words from TV and friends like 'stupid,' 'I hate you,' 'God,' 'crap,' etc. It can feel overwhelming to try to have only a few rules when it comes to correcting a thousand words that you don't want them to say. One way you can address this is by having all rules about words be summed up in one rule: SAY WORDS THAT DADDY SAYS. Teach your children that they should say what Mom and Dad say (or sound the way Mom and Dad sound). If your child starts saying a word or using a tone that you don't like, ask them questions like these: "Do you sound like Daddy sounds? Does your voice sound like Daddy's voice? Who does your voice sound like? Does Daddy say those words or does somebody else say those words?" With the truth of the gospel transforming your everyday values, live life in a way that allows you to confidently say: "Children: Be like me."

Not only will this allow you to effectively teach your children appropriate vocabulary, but it will help them learn to imitate a worthy role model. Later in life your children will need to learn to imitate God. When they face a challenging circumstance, it will be important for them to ask questions like:

- “What does God feel about this?”
- “What do God’s feelings about this reflect about what He knows?”
- “How can I begin to coach myself to feel the way God feels about my challenging circumstance?”
- “How does God want to make me more like His Son?”

Principle 2 - Make it comprehensible. If your child is confused about what tone she is allowed to use, model appropriate tones and phrases. Say to your child, “Sound like this when you say that. Don’t sound like this when you say it. This is how Daddy sounds and this is the way I want you to sound.”

Principle 3 - Be consistent. Avoid the tendency to only correct your child’s vocabulary and tone of voice when you get tired of it. It’s easy to go about your activities ignoring words and tones that are borderline inappropriate. If you do this, however, your toddler will be confused about what is acceptable and what’s inappropriate. Avoid the tendency to nag. If you find yourself frequently repeating the phrase, “We don’t use those words/tones in our house,” you’re probably starting to nag. God doesn’t nag us to change our behavior. Nagging can tend to foster frustration and anger on the part of the parent and resentment on the part of the child. Instead of nagging have 1-clear rules and 2- expected, consistent consequences for rule infractions. When my 4 year old uses a tone of voice that is not honoring I say, “That’s not the kind of voice I want you to use. Go touch your nose to a wall and come back to me.” When she comes back to me I ask her to try saying the same phrase again in a more respectful tone.

### **How to decide what or who to let your toddler interact with:**

Toddlers are very impressionable. There are so many things that can influence the way they talk, eat, want to dress, play, respond to authority etc. So what should a parent do? Some parents remove as many outside influences, from the attention of their kids, as possible. Some parents seem not to notice that their child is impressionable and don’t filter out any potentially negative influences. Other parents don’t value impressing upon their kids values that reflect God’s character. What should a parent do if a friend or family member might be offended if your values, or parenting style, are different? What if another mom gets angry because you don’t want your kid hanging out with their kid? What if your sister-in-law thinks that she’s better than you because her kids don’t act like your kids? It’s sort of a messy set of questions that leads to messy situations.

Here are some principles that can help you navigate through this set of questions:

- A parent should be the primary influence in the toddler’s life. A parent’s example is the one that should have the heaviest influence on a child.
- A parent should be the most significant influence on the child towards God. It’s not primarily the job of Sunday School volunteers to show a toddler what God is like.
- A parent is like a gate. A parent’s habits, priorities, values, possessions can allow good or bad into a toddler’s life.

- A parent is like a watchman. A parent should be vigilant and care about what the toddler is experiencing in regards to things, and people, that can influence her in a positive or negative way.
- A parent is like a shepherd. A parent should energetically and intentionally lead the child to what's good, safe and nourishing. A parent should protect their child not only from physical harm but from things that could harm them emotionally and spiritually. If parents see that an outside influence is negatively affecting their child in an overwhelming way, they should limit the amount that she can be influenced by that outside source.
- A parent's standards should consistently prevail in environments where there are competing standards. If your child acts inappropriately because they are influenced by an outside source, have a conversation to remind her of what is most valuable.
- A parent should be jealous. Parents should pursue their children so that they have their children's affection. A parent should be concerned if the child cares more about a playmate's opinion than the parent's opinion.

### Wrapping Up The Chapter

If you want you can skip the rest of this chapter. Some of it is repetition. I included it because it contains some of the principles that have convinced me that it's SO IMPORTANT for me to lead my children well.

It's so important for toddlers to learn to *prefer* being under authority. When my oldest daughter was 1 year old, I tried to give her lots of practice doing things that she didn't want to do. Of course, she had plenty of times to play or eat what she wanted. I gave her plenty of opportunities to tell me what to do during games. I consistently told her that I liked her ideas and preferences. However, I also realized that I needed to give her practice doing things she didn't like. I knew I would be ***doing her a disservice if the only feeling she had in life was the feeling of doing what she wanted.*** My purpose was to help her learn what I continually need to learn: that life is best NOT when I'm doing what I want to do but what God wants me to do.

I didn't realize that giving my daughter chances to do what I wanted (instead of what she wanted) would cause her emotional pain. I remember being surprised by how she cried when I would not let her get her way. Although she wasn't experiencing any physical pain, her cry seemed to express some kind of internal suffering or loss. My opposition of her will was gentle, kind and consistent, but it seemed as though something inside of her was dying. Sometimes her cry was quiet and sad. Sometimes her cry was furious. There were many times that she would scream out, "NO DADDY! I WILL NOT DO WHAT YOU SAY!" In those moments I was not emotionally charged. I would gently hold her. Sometimes I wouldn't say anything. Sometimes I would quietly say, "I will let go of you when you stop screaming."



I probably would've been concerned about this except that I knew ***she couldn't really flourish in life unless she let go of her furious commitment to doing her own will.*** I wasn't opposed to her preferences. I wasn't opposed to her expressing opinions. I love encouraging her to want things and suggest ideas. I want her unique personality to flourish and to bless others. But I knew something was wrong when she would consistently resist doing an idea of mine when she already decided to do it according to *her* idea.

There's a part of me that might feel nervous about lovingly opposing her will. I haven't read the resources/books, but I've heard that they're out there. Parenting resources that say, "opposing a toddler's will prevents them from flourishing as an individual." However, as time goes on and my children grow older, I'm not really nervous about that at all. Although my children are far from perfect (and I'll never expect them to be perfect) they ARE flourishing. Verses found in lots of places in the Bible further encourage me NOT to be nervous about being committed to lovingly leading my children and expecting them to willingly obey.

"Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you."

Deut 6:3 (NIV)

"If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you. I will make my words known to you. ...whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster."

Prov. 1:23, 33 (ESV)

"Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you..."

Ephesians 6:1-3 (ESV)

An infant or toddler shouldn't have an exclusively choice-making life because they don't know how life works best. Instead, adults should tell children truth about how life works best by leading them. Parents should let their children's encounters with them introduce them to how pleasant it feels to have God be your king. Children should have the gift of feeling what it's like to submit to the will of a good leader. Individuals who live like this will be most happy. Allow your child to thrive by giving them experiences of how good it is to trust their good leader to be the primary plan-maker.

Lastly, the toddler stage of Radiance Parenting is NOT about behavior modification or raising good boys and girls. Our goal is NOT to teach our children that God's ultimate will for us is to do good and not bad so that we can have a greater chance of getting to heaven. Christian parenting is NOT about raising moral children. There are many adults who act morally but whose lives are full of discontent, anger, bitterness, empty religion. God is not a dry, stoic rule setter. God isn't like a principal behind a big desk. Radiance Parents must avoid filling their children's lives with rules, instructions and orders. Once infants become mobile, we can't just start using the word 'NO' a lot. It will be harmful to start threatening your toddler with lots of consequences like, "If you throw that on the floor I will NOT give you any chocolate."

Overusing the word 'NO' can start to make your child deaf to your voice. Have you ever seen a parent chase an unruly child around the house or grocery store saying 'NO' a thousand times without ever successfully redirecting the child's behavior? Lots of rules, without strong, loving leadership and teaching, can tend to sap joy and affection out of the environment of a family. The same will be true if a parent just starts to threaten his child with lots of consequences.

I'm passionate about these themes because of what I'm going through in my personal relationship with God. In my past, when I've become aware of another sinful pattern in my life, I've felt like I've had to "get better," "become a better Christian," and "do a better job at following God's rules." I'm realizing that God doesn't feel that way about my sin and sanctification. He loves me. He's proud of me. He doesn't correct me and reveal sin in my life SO THAT I CAN FINALLY ARRIVE AT BEING LOVED BECAUSE I'M PERFORMING WELL ENOUGH IN LIFE. God loves me now. God enjoys me now. AND He's committed to continually teach me and lead me well.

I want my children to experience similar things in their interactions with me so that, when they grow older, it will be easy for them to believe that they have a Father King: God who loves them passionately and leads with beautiful strength.

# - CHAPTER 9 -

## POTTY TRAINING

(BY SARAH HOWARD)

Oh, Potty Training. You confounding little acquisition of ability, you. (HA!) People fear you. Parents dread you. Children are intrigued by you...and then complain about you. Moms despair that you'll ever be over and done with. You're quite the little season of life, aren't you?

Well, as I'm sure you already know by now if you're reading this...there SO MANY WAYS to potty train! It's obviously not a 'right-or-wrong' moral issue. It's just an issue of: your personality style, what works for your family, and how quickly you'd like to get it over with (...and how much hair you're willing to pull out in the process!)

When I potty-trained our two children, I leaned heavily on one chapter in a parenting book. There were many things I appreciated about this book (and series of books), as well as many things that I found I didn't agree with or didn't want to implement in our home. But potty-training was one (of many) areas where I was really helped by this series: *On Becoming Babywise* by Gary Ezzo. The book that specifically introduces potty-training for the first time is *ToddlerWise* and the chapter is Chapter 7: 'Potty Training Made Easy.' I believe they have a whole book on the subject, but I never read it. I found the information in the one chapter on potty-training to be sufficient.

So as I said, there are a million ways to go about potty-training. If you want to categorize some of them, there's the laid back approach (let's learn over weeks and months...if you want to try the potty, you can, but not too much pressure). There's the somewhat-laid-back-and-somewhat-insisted-upon approach (I'll let you run around in panties for the summer and try to remind you to use the potty), and there's the we're-doing-this-and we're-doing-it-now approach.

I personally chose the 'we're-doing-this-now' approach with both children. My first child responded better than my second did...my second did great, but just took a little bit longer to stop having accidents. My first daughter was mostly potty-trained in a week...completely

potty-trained in two. My second daughter was about the same, but she'd have sporadic accidents for a few months afterwards.

So, I know when I was potty-training my children, I didn't want to know a lot of 'Why's'. I just wanted to know HOW to do it. Just tell me what you're suggesting I do. Don't give me a lot of theory. Give me the HOW.

So here it is. The HOW. (Or at least MY 'how'...it doesn't have to be YOUR 'how'). This is how I potty-trained:

1- You have to be prepared as the adult. For this method to work well, you have to be very, very, very prepared. By prepared I mean:

- You must understand the sequence of what you'll be doing, AS WELL AS what you'll be emphasizing and not emphasizing. More on that later.
- You need to have all the equipment out and ready. You'll need:
  - A Potty. (I chose a small child-sized one that was given to us).
  - Underwear. Preferably ones that your child will think are SUPERCOOL. And I'd get a bunch if I were you...because they're gonna get wet.
  - Treats. Yes, yes. I know all the rage now-a-days is to avoid rewarding with food. I agree. Mostly. But in this instance, I decided that getting that little bottom to figure out how to do 'peepee's' and 'pooopies' on a potty was worth a time period of rewarding them with something that would be clearly 'desirable'. I decided to reward with food for a short time period...to deal with the consequences...and to walk through ending that routine when potty-training was over.
    - By treats, I mean a stash of something yummy. We used chocolate covered raisins and M&M's.
    - The treats should be something small. Individual-sized things.
    - You can go for a healthier option if your kid would be motivated by it...like grapes or nuts or something like that.
  - Drinks. For my first daughter, this was no problem. She drinks A LOT during the day. My second daughter, though, could go all day without drinking. So I had to have something on hand that would tempt her more than usual...like juice.
  - A stuffed animal or a doll that your child can 'teach'.
- You need to be sure that this is the method you're going to use. You can't really start this method and then decide you want to move to laid-back-approach, and still see quick results. You gotta steel yourself for the week or so ahead of you. It's not gonna be fun. But you'll come out of it being DONE.

2- You need to set aside AT LEAST a full week to work on this full-time. Don't plan to leave the house or have friends over. You need to dedicate yourself to potty-training for this whole week.

OK. So here's how it all goes down:

- You plan ahead for when you're going to start potty-training. You get all your supplies ready, and you lay them out somewhere for your child to SEE BUT NOT TOUCH. Lay out the panties and the treats and the drinks.
- Tell your child "On this day (i.e. Wednesday), we're going to START POTTY-TRAINING! YAY! WOOHOO! You're going to learn to go peepee's on the potty. YAY! You're getting SO BIG! This is very exciting and very big...and we will start on Wednesday. All this stuff here is for Wednesday, when you start potty-training."
  - Make SURE you don't give them any of the treats beforehand. That pretty much ruins/undermines a lot of your method if they get to have the 'special treats' on regular occasions beforehand.
- Get YOUR MIND around the sequence and theory:
  - THIS EMPHASIS IS VERY IMPORTANT: You're primarily wanting to reward DRY AND CLEAN IN THE PANTIES...NOT PEEPEE ON POTTY. The goal isn't peepee. The goal is: 'keep yourself dry and clean BY going peepee's on the potty.'
  - So when you reward your child, you're first rewarding if they're Dry and Clean...not if they go on the potty. More on this below. You'll understand more as you read along.
- So. On the big Start Day:
  - Get your child up. I had my girls eat breakfast in their diaper.
  - Then. Take them to the bathroom or wherever you set up your permanent potty station.
  - Put their new, cool underwear on them.
  - Tell them their job is to 'Keep their underwear Dry and Clean.' Tell them you'll be helping them check for dry and clean panties many times today.
  - Then, put a pair of panties also on their stuffed animal or babydoll. You want them to watch the whole sequence as their doll/animal does it. This helps with the learning process. Ask the doll/animal if their panties are Dry and Clean. Have your child check (they can feel the dolls/animals panties to see if they're Dry and Clean). When your child says that they're Dry and Clean, 'give' the doll a treat. (Let your child eat it). Then, put the doll on the potty. Make a peepee sound (PSSSSS...) and pour a little bit of water into the potty. Take the doll off, congratulate her ("You did peepee's on the potty! You kept yourself Dry and Clean! That's great!") and give her ANOTHER treat (again, let your child eat it). Pull up the doll's panties.
    - If you want, you can go over this sequence again and have your child lead it. They can be the leader of the doll, asking it if it's Dry and Clean, putting it on the potty, administering rewards, and so on. Repetition :)
      - Honestly, I only used the doll/stuffed animal a few times before I didn't want to keep repeating it. So pretty much only did this on the first morning of potty-training.
  - Then, THE BIG MOMENT: THEIR TURN!

- BEFORE BEFORE BEFORE you put them on the potty, ASK THEM if they are Dry and Clean.
- Have them stick their hand in the front of their underwear and CHECK to see if they are dry. Remember: the goal is not peepee's on the potty. The goal is to stay Dry and Clean BY going peepees on the potty.
- If they say, "Yes, I'm Dry and Clean," give them a treat. (Again, we used M&M's and chocolate-covered raisins).
- Have them then sit on the potty. If they pee, GREAT, give them another treat. If they don't, no worries. I wouldn't really expect them to pee right away. They need time to figure it all out. Let them sit there for 2 minutes, and if no pee comes, get them up, pull up the underwear, and say, "We'll try again soon!" with a happy face. Do not give them another treat if they don't pee. But DO give them verbal praise either way (i.e. "You're doing so well. You're Dry and Clean. You're getting so big, wearing panties and sitting on the potty. We'll try again soon!")
  - DO NOT give them other special treats during the potty-training time period. That will totally undermine the leverage you've got with the 'You did it!' treats. So lay off of chips, popsicles, candy, and any other kind of treat while you're potty-training. Don't outright tell your child that you're not giving them extra treats- you don't want them to feel punished- but if they ask for other treats, just casually say, "No...not today. Maybe another day!" and stick to your guns!
- After you get them up from the potty, give them a cup of yummy drink, like juice or water with fruit in it, or milk, or chocolate milk. Have them take at least a few sips. (Remember: drinking will make them have to pee...your goal today is for your child to have a lot of chances to pee on the potty. The way to makes those chances happen is for them to drink a lot.)
- Take them to an area in your house where you have toys. Let them play, and get on the floor and play with them. Tell them, "Remember, you have BIG KID PANTIES on! No peepees in the panties. We go peepee's on the potty now. Tell me if you have to go peepee's. I'll take you to the potty."
- Play together for 15-20 minutes. NO LONGER.
- After 15-20 minutes, take them to the bathroom. Whether they want to or not. Ask them, "Are you Dry and Clean?" Have them feel their underwear to see if they are dry or not. If they are, give them one treat. Put them on the potty. If they pee, give them another treat. If they don't, do not give a treat, but tell them, "Good job! We'll try the potty again soon!"
  - If they are not Dry and Clean, just tell them, "Whoops! Not Dry and Clean. Not treat this time. But we'll put a new pair of panties

on you and we'll try again! Remember, to get the treat, you have to stay Dry and Clean by going peepee's on the potty."

- Give them another drink of yummy drink.
- Don't get discouraged. The peepee's have to come out eventually...for my second child, it took pretty much ALL MORNING UNTIL LUNCH TIME for any pee to come out of her body. She doesn't like to drink very much, so it was torture getting her to drink enough to pee :)
- Keep up this cycle EVERY 20 MINUTES...all day. That's why I said that you have to devote your life to potty-training if you go with this method. You have no space or time for other things, like grocery shopping or playdates. Potty-training is what you're doing all day.
- If your child takes a nap, put a diaper on them for naptime and give them (and yourself!) a break. Take a deep breath and plop on the couch while they rest! Then when they get up, take them right away to the potty to try to pee. Put their underwear on right away. Start again.
  - When I potty trained my children, I 'day-time potty-trained' them first. I had them still wear a diaper for nap and bedtime for a year to a year and a half after they were 'day-time potty-trained.' Then I 'night-time potty-trained' them. You can do it another way (there are so many other ways!!) but I have no advice for doing day-time and night-time potty-training at the same time:)

Ok. So What To Do if your child pees in their panties/underwear during the 15 minute play time intervals (and not in the potty):

- First of all, don't get discouraged! It will happen A LOT! It's OK! It's actually part of the process.
- When they have the accident, if they're not able to stop, simply say, "It's OK! It's OK! Remember, we're trying to stay Dry and Clean today. Remember you have panties on. We go peepee's in the potty now. No more diapers! We go peepee's in the potty. Let's try to go peepee's in the potty next time so you can get a treat! We can't have a treat this time because peepee's in the panties make you not Dry and Clean. But we will keep trying! It's OK!" And give them more drink to produce more pee.
- If they're able to stop, I'd try to say, "Wait, wait, we go peepee's in the potty now!" And run them to the potty. They can get a treat if they do some of those peepee's on the potty, but not for being Dry and Clean, so they should only get ONE treat. Not two.
  - NEVER EVER shame them for accidents. You can REMIND them where they're supposed to pee ("Remember, we go peepee's on the POTTY now. Not in panties. In the POTTY"). You can COACH them ("Let's try to go peepee in the potty next time! You'll get your two treats when you stay Dry and Clean by going peepee in the potty"). But NEVER EVER shame them ("Yuck! Pee on the floor!" or "You're such a baby!" or "Your sister always does a good job going to the

potty. Why can't you be like her?" or "Only babies pee on the floor. You're not a baby, are you?")

- NEVER EVER discipline them for accidents (never spank, smack, time-out or isolate for accidents).
- ALWAYS encourage them to remember the goal (and their job) is to try to stay Dry and Clean by going on the potty.
- Whenever they DO go on the potty, CELEBRATE IT! Give them the treat (not more than one, though), and say things like, "Yay! You did it! You stayed Dry and Clean in your panties by going peepee on the potty! Yay!" and spin them around in a circle or something celebratory. Make them feel proud of their accomplishment. It really IS an accomplishment!
- I remember when I was potty-training my first child. There were like 15 pairs of rinsed-out panties drying on the side of the tub that first day. She kept peeing and peeing and peeing in her panties. But we kept trying. We'd just repeat the routine over and over. And she got it by the end of 2-3 days. This routine really does work, if you stick with it!

#### **What to do when YOU get discouraged:**

- Take a deep breath. This method of potty-training is intensive. For me, I felt depressed, antsy, angry, stir-crazy, and many other negative emotions while being cooped up at home for the official potty-training week. It's OK! You can feel those things and not act on them.
- Talk to your spouse or a support person. Don't act on your negative emotions during potty-training by verbally or physically lashing out at your child. Don't give up because you feel claustrophobic at home with such a rigid routine. And don't suppress your emotions by keeping them all inside and pretending they're not there. Tell someone how you feel. (Not in front of your child). And then KEEP GOING.
- Keep up the routine. I cannot emphasize this enough. Do not relent and put a diaper back on your child (unless it's naptime or bedtime). This will just be confusing for your child and slow down the process. If you keep this routine going faithfully, your child will 'get it' in (at the most) a week. It might be a week from you-know-where, but at least it'll JUST BE A WEEK, and eventually it'll be done. If you put a diaper back on your child because you're tired, you'll be erasing all the hard work you've done all ready and starting not just at Square One, but at Square Negative One (because your child will now be confused and think, "Well, if I have enough accidents, I'll get my diaper back...")
- Now, all that being said, if a crisis comes up in your home, if you or your child get throwing-up sick, or something of that nature, or if you (after talking to your support person many times) decide that potty-training in a few days or a week is just too intense for your family, then go ahead and out the diaper back on...but make sure you switch methods in your mind. Switch to the laid-back method of having them go when they are interested, or potty-training over a few months or a year. There is NOTHING WRONG with those methods. There is nothing moral about potty-training. There is no shame in



switching methods. But you just have to be clear in your mind which method you are choosing to employ. This is the biggest difficulty I see in parents who are potty-training. They're not sure which method they're choosing...so they try to incorporate 'week-long potty-training' expectations for their child into 'year-long potty-training' methods and follow-through. That will just be frustrating for everyone involved!

- Realize that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. What you are doing will work. It just takes A LOT of patience, follow-through, routine, and deep breaths. I potty trained my first daughter at 20 months (in order to have her not in diapers when her sister born), and my youngest at 27 months. It is possible, even if they're little. If they're having accidents, don't assume they're not ready. This method is parent-led, not child-led.
- Take a break! Ask your spouse or your support person to stay at home during nap or when your child is asleep at night and GET OUT OF THE HOUSE! Go grab a coffee with some girlfriends. Grocery shop if that's relaxing to you. Take a walk. Go for a run. Take some time to read or journal. Just give yourself a break somehow, so that you can keep your sanity for the next day.

#### After the first 2-3 (or so) days: A New Routine

- After you've gone through the every-20-minutes-to-the-potty boot camp of the first two or three days, you should start to see more successful potty trips. When you do, you can start to relax a little bit. You can add more time in between potty trips. You can allow the child more freedom in their playing times (not needing to be right next to you).
- After a few days of lots of success at staying Dry and Clean, you can venture out of the house with your child in their underwear (NOT A DIAPER OR A PULL-UP!). Make sure you know where the potty is located. Plan for a SHORT excursion into The World Outside of Your House. Take the child to the bathroom before you leave the house, when you get there, and before you leave to come home. Make sure you bring your treats for when the child is Dry and Clean!
- After several days of short outings, you can slowly ease back into your regular life.
- Continue to TAKE your child to the potty. Lengthen the intervals in between potty breaks, but for a week or two, YOU be the one who insists that it's potty time and that they must try to pee. Don't assume they will just tell you when they have to go. Take them if they do tell you, but set intervals when you tell them it's time to try.
  - After LOTS of days of YOU taking THEM to the potty (like two weeks or so), you can make the transition into them telling you when they have to go. I'd make this transition when I have almost 100% success on the potty for about a week or so. I'd tell the child many, many times during the day that they should tell me when they have to go potty and I'll take them. And I'd expect an increase in accidents for a time while they're getting the hang of realizing they have to go. I didn't make this transition with my second child for about 2 months because she just wasn't ready for that responsibility yet.
- There will be accidents. Anytime you lengthen the intervals between potty time, or ask them to tell you when they have to go, or start easing back into regular life, there will be

an increase in accidents. It's OK. They're still figuring it all out. Try to handle the accidents with grace and gentle reminders that their job is to stay Dry and Clean by using the potty.

- Take the reward treats with you. Stick a bag of treats in your purse when you go out, and make sure you're consistent with the treats.
- Also take a spare pair of underwear (or two or three!) with you all the time. Expect that your child will have some accidents while in a store or at the playground. It's OK.
- Finally, when they've established a strong pattern of being able to tell you when they have to use the bathroom, after like 2-6 months of consistent potty-using, you can transition into sending them into the potty to use it by themselves. Some parents transition into this stage too early and without proper training, because they're just stinkin' tired of taking their child to the bathroom. I totally understand! It's exhausting to take them over and over. But if you wait until they've got a really good history of using the potty with you there, you're setting them up for success on their own. I'd suggest giving them explicit instructions about how to wipe themselves when they pee, how to wash their hands, etc. And I'd suggest having them call you to come and wipe them when they poop, until they've been using the potty for quite some time. Then you can teach them how to wipe their own bottom. But I'd suggest waiting on that for awhile so that they're not overwhelmed with the amount of new skills they have to learn.

Other set-backs:

- Sometimes it takes longer for a child to figure out how to poop. That's fine. I personally wouldn't put my child in a diaper to poop if they're having trouble 'getting it.' You'd be creating a whole different realm of new issues to deal with. I'd just watch for their 'I have to go poop' movements and mannerisms and take them to the potty as soon as you notice it. Kids are typically pretty obvious when they have to poop. They'll squat, go to a corner of the room, get a glazed look in their eyes, stare into the distance, grab their diaper area, get quiet, get shifty...my daughter will want me to hold her, put her down, hold her, put her down. She can't sit still. When your child starts doing things like that, they probably won't want to sit on the potty. But I would insist, and try to distract them while on the potty. I'd read them a book, have them watch part of a video, let them play games on my phone, anything to distract them so that they can spend some time waiting for the poop to come out. This might take several attempts. And your child might have more poop accidents than other children. And 'skid marks' in their underwear. But they'll eventually get the hang of it.
- Juice can give a child 'the runs.' Milk can constipate. If you're having either of these difficulties, switch to another beverage.
- So. Lastly. The treats. I've been suggesting that you give your child CHOCOLATE every time they are dry, as well as every time they pee or poop. THAT'S A LOT OF CHOCOLATE! Especially if, in the beginning, they're going to the bathroom every 20 minutes!!!! So, you obviously can't sustain that amount of chocolate forever. First of all, I'd say, prepare for the inevitable fact that your child will be a little bit wired with that

amount of treats in their system while you're potty-training. It's OK. It's just a season. They might take a little longer to fall asleep or might be extra whiny. It's OK. Second, I'd say, after they're very established on the potty, start to wean off the treats. Tell them things like, "We're going to try something new. If you stay Dry and Clean for the WHOLE DAY, I will give two treats at the end of the day." Then, "If you stay Dry and Clean for two days, I'll give you the two treats." And so on and so forth until you just stop the treats. You can use a chart to help them see their progress and success if you'd like. But I just had it in my head that, yes, we don't usually give our kids this much candy. But potty-training is for a season, and this is a very understandable way for my child to be motivated to use the potty. Treats 'speak their language.'

So there you have. Potty-training a la Howards. Take it or leave it. We hope it helps!

# - CHAPTER 10 -

## WHAT ABOUT SPANKING?

Yikes! Spanking is such a loaded topic to talk about.

If someone asked me whether or not I spank my children, I'd ask them, "**What** is spanking?" Is spanking...:

- ...a dad swatting a crying child with a belt?
- ...using a wooden spoon from a kitchen to repeatedly whack a child that has done one too many wrong things in a day?
- ...an angry, yelling, frustrated parent not knowing what else to do to make a child stop?
- ...a parent emotionally out of control because the defiance of the child has made him/her sooo angry?
- ...a parent hitting the child until he says sorry and promises not to do it again?
- ...an experience leaving the child feeling shame, bitterness, hate towards the one who is doing the spanking?
- ...a confusing experience for the child? (i.e. Why am I getting spanked for this and not for that?)

I'd also ask the question, "**Why** would a parent spank a child?" Does a parent spank a child because...:

- ...the parent has lost his/her patience?
- ...the parent doesn't know what else to do to make the child stop a particular behavior?
- ...the child has done one too many bad things on a given day?
- ...they heard someone once say that biblical Christians should spank children?
- ...they broke a 'major rule,' yet the children never quite know what the major rules are? (i.e. Does the sibling tell his sister something to the effect of, "Now you're gonna get it! Mom is really going to be mad now? You'll probably get spanked for that.")
- ...the parent can use spanking as a threat? (i.e. "Do you want a spanking, young man!?)

I'd also ask the question, "**How** do parents, who spank their children, do it?" Do they...:

- ...lean them over the edge of the bed and hit them with a belt?
- ...continue spanking until they feel justice has been served?
- ...use a wooden spoon from the kitchen? or a paddle?
- ...sneak in a whack to a misbehaving child as he runs away?
- ...spank publicly or in places where other siblings can see and 'learn their lesson'?

- ...lecture their children while they're getting spanked thinking that it will make their teaching 'sink in' better?

If anyone asked me, "Do you spank your children?" and their answers to any of the questions above were, "Yes," then I'd respond by saying, "No. I don't spank my children and have never spanked my children." I'd say this because, according to the descriptions above, it's true. I've never gotten so mad that I thought it would be good to hit my child. I've never spanked them until I think they've gotten what they deserved. I've never spanked them because I don't know how else to stop a particular behavior.

However, I would not end the conversation there. I would say, "One time my oldest daughter said, 'I need a spanking, Daddy. Can you give me a spanking?'" Of course this statement would require some explanation, and here's what my explanation would be:

Anytime a parent disciplines a child (whether they administer some sort of physical pain or not), **the motivation for discipline must be to rescue**. Discipline should be restorative rather than punitive. A parent should NOT discipline out of frustration, annoyance, or uncontrolled anger. Discipline shouldn't be the way parents get their kids to 'behave right,' nor should it be the way Christians attempt to make their children 'more Christian.'

Generally, when a parent doesn't see discipline as rescue, they are misplacing their focus on a child's outward behavior. The parent may be unaware that outward behaviors reveal what's going on inside of a child's heart (i.e. his values, priorities, beliefs, emotions). A parent should care about outward behavior **because it's a window into a more serious matter** of the condition of a child's heart. And the condition of a child's heart is what matters to God and is what *should* matter to parents.

Consider the examples below:

A child's outward behavior:	What the behavior reveals about his/her values, priorities, beliefs etc.:
...walks the other way when Daddy says, "Come to Daddy."	<p><b>Value:</b> I value doing things 'my way.' I value self-rule.</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> I prioritize following my will/voice over following Daddy's voice.</p> <p><b>Belief:</b> "My dad's instruction is a threat to my right to rule myself. My way is better/more fun. My way is what I should be committed to. It will feel better if I rebel against my dad's leadership."</p>
...hears Mommy's verbal instruction, but chooses to ignore it.	<p><b>Value:</b> I value having the uninterrupted ability to do whatever I please.</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> I prioritize the satisfaction of my plans and desires.</p>

	<b>Belief:</b> "What Mommy says is not significant for me."
...cries when a babysitter takes his/her toy and gives it to another child.	<b>Value:</b> "I value having what I want." <b>Priority:</b> "I prioritize my needs over the needs of everyone else around me." <b>Belief:</b> "I have to hold on to what I want. If I let go control of what I want I will lose it."
...says, "I hate you Mommy," or, "You don't love me," when child doesn't get his/her way.	<b>Value:</b> "I value control." <b>Priority:</b> "I prioritize getting my way over the feelings of others." <b>Belief:</b> "Life is about getting my way. Nothing matters except getting what I want."

Seeing outward behaviors as indicators of inward 'conditions of the heart' will help a parent realize that ***a toddler's defiance is not cute***. It shouldn't be seen as a game when a child runs the other way from a parent who says, "Come here." A child who values self-rule and total control is in danger and it's a parent's job to rescue the child; bringing them back to a place of safety. A parent does not ignore a toddler that is wandering into a busy street. Neither should a parent ignore a toddler who is developing dangerous patterns of self-rule.

There are many ways that a parent can effectively restore their sinning child to safety. (i.e. time-outs, go to your room, any of the ways mentioned on page 109 and more) Whatever the discipline method, the goal is deeper than behavior modification. A parent should not make the mistake of thinking that a child has been effectively rescued from the danger of sin simply because they've demonstrated compliant behavior. Behavioral compliance is not the goal of discipline. Neither is behavioral compliance God's goal for intervening in our lives. God isn't mostly interested in us doing good things just like God isn't mostly interested in us having kids who do good things. God values things that are deeper than outward behavior. His purpose in sending Jesus to Earth wasn't to fill church buildings with moral people. Jesus was sent to rescue us from the dangerous, inward condition of our hearts. He came to set us free from valuing self-rule. He wants us to experience greatest joy as truth about the way He is has primary influence on our values, priorities, beliefs and emotions. He knows that our only place of real safety exists when we have our hearts aligned (in agreement with) the things that He values. These realities need to inform our perspective of what disciplining our children really is.

The goal of discipline as heart-rescue is clearly implied in verses from the book of Proverbs printed below. (And here, with the introduction of the word 'rod,' is where we'll get into dealing with the word spanking). (Side note: be careful to not make the wrong conclusions when you read these verses. I don't think the severe tone, with which these verse were written, is meant to instruct parents in regards to the degree of severity with which they should apply physical pain. I believe, rather, that the severe tone is meant to instruct parents in regards to the severe danger that their child is in when he is developing patterns of self-rule. The verses aren't saying, "Be violent towards your child." The verses ARE saying, "Because your self-ruling child is in danger, be passionate in your intentionality to bring them back to a place of safety because it's a matter of life and death."

- “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish them with the rod, they will not die.” (Proverbs 23:13)
- “Punish them with the rod and save them from death.” (Proverbs 23:14)
- “A rod and a reprimand impart wisdom, but a child left undisciplined disgraces its mother.” (Proverbs 29:15)
- “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far away.” (Proverbs 22:15)
- “Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.” (Proverbs 13:24)

The verses are teaching that something significant needs to happen as a way of waking a child up to the reality of the seriousness of sin’s consequence. If parents neglect to discipline their children, sinful patterns will develop that lead to danger, death and disgrace. The verses teach that misbehavior is not a thing to be taken lightly.

The sad thing is that many adults, in the United States, take a child’s misbehavior and sin very lightly. Many adults say that it’s cute when their young child says disrespectful things or runs away from a parent who says, “Come here.” They will even proudly post YouTube videos that go viral with adults laughing at defiant young children. Patterns of toddler defiance, when left undisciplined, is as funny as watching a toddler wander onto a busy highway.

American adults *do get some things right*. We don’t let our toddlers:

- play on the street because we realize that there is a real danger of our children being hit by a car.
- play with lit candles because we realize that there is a real danger of our children lighting themselves on fire.
- playing with pots of boiling water because we realize that there is a real danger of our children being scalded.
- playing with electrical outlets because there is the real danger of electrocution.

American adults will loudly yell and severely discipline their kids to warn them of impending physical danger, yet we are guilty of ignoring, overlooking and even encouraging dangerous behavior that will threaten their spiritual and emotional safety.

**In God’s mind it’s just as dangerous (if not more dangerous) for a toddler to be un-rescued when he disobeys than to be un-rescued when he runs into the street.**

This is why there are verses that speak of using pain as a way to wake a child up to the danger of his sin. God doesn’t want a parent to use pain as a way of venting frustration. God doesn’t want a parent to use pain as a way of changing the outward behavior of a child. God doesn’t want a parent to use pain as a way to shame or scare the child into obedience. However, God does think it’s loving and wise for parents to appropriately use pain to rescue the heart of a child who otherwise would die from the consequences of being in the dangerous place of sin.

My wife and I have been thoughtful regarding how we can ***appropriately use pain to rescue our children from the severe dangers of sin***. We offer the following principles, not as the only right way to appropriately use pain for rescue, but as guideposts that have helped us (and

our children) experience God's presence through the discipline process. In our house when we use appropriate pain to rescue we call it a 'pow-pow' or a 'spanking'. If you don't want to use the word 'spanking,' feel free to substitute it for another word. For the purposes of this book I will use the word 'pow-pow'.

### **1- In our family everyone knows WHY 'pow-pow' will be given.**

**Why?:** When I was young my parents gave us a 'pow-pow' only for instances of disobeying and lying. Keep the rules simple. Don't let your children be forever guessing why they will get a 'pow-pow'. A child should know why they are getting a 'pow-pow.' If the answer to 'why' is, "Because you've been bad all day," you are letting your discipline be punitive and not restorative. Giving 'pow-pows' for disobeying and lying is good because when a child disobeys and lies, there are serious matters of the heart happening. It would be appropriate to consistently use appropriate pain to rescue in those instances.

Our children (ages 4 and 2) haven't gotten into bad habits of lying, at least not yet. So in our house we only give 'pow-pows' for instances of disobedience.

### **2- Do everything you can to help your child succeed at obeying or telling the truth.**

We always give our daughters one clear warning before we give a 'pow-pow'. If we tell our daughter, "Come to Daddy," and she runs the other way, we calmly get her attention and remind her that if she does not obey she will have to get a 'pow-pow.' Then we repeat the instruction. If she obeys, then we don't give the 'pow-pow.' If she disobeys, even after receiving the clear warning, then we must give a 'pow-pow' to rescue her from the danger she's in.

### **3- In our family everyone knows HOW a 'pow-pow' will be given.**

**How?:** You should be consistent with how you give a 'pow-pow' to your child. Your child should always know exactly what to expect when it's time to be brought back to safety through the administration of a 'pow-pow.' Your child should know that you feel 'pow-pows' are not fun. Tell them that 'pow-pows' are sad and that Mommy and Daddy don't like it when a 'pow-pow' has to happen. Tell them their disobedience makes the house (meaning family environment) sad. Not doing what Mommy and Daddy says is very sad. Say, "we don't like 'pow-pows' in this house. But they have to happen to show that disobeying is very, very sad."

Tell your child what the 'pow-pow' is going to feel like. Tell them that it's going to hurt. Tell them how many times they will get a 'pow-pow.' Don't change the number of 'pow-pows' they get based on the severity of their disobedience. The number of times you give a 'pow-pow' should always be the same and can depend on your child's age. When we started giving our daughters 'pow-pows' we gave them 3. Now our oldest daughter (who rarely needs to get a 'pow-pow' anymore) gets 4.

Tell them what will happen right after they get their 'pow-pow.' Since any form of discipline is for the purpose of rescue and restoration, **the 'pow-pow' should lead to something very good.** Disobedience, or lying, leads to something very bad. A 'pow-pow' should cause the emergence of something really good. Mostly our 'pow-pows' end with long hugs. I can't remember a time that our 'pow-pows' haven't ended with our daughters putting their arms around our neck and



holding us tightly. In the minutes before my daughters disobey, their attitude is usually hard, closed and oppositional. In the minutes after a 'pow-pow,' their attitude is open, soft, affectionate and receptive to my words and teaching. These are all signs that the 'pow-pow' has been an effective means to rescue the heart from a dangerous place.

I tell my daughters that I will hold them right after a 'pow-pow.' I tell them things like, "I will give you 3 'pow-pows' and then it will be ALL DONE." "I don't like disobeying. Disobeying is sad. So I will give 3 'pow-pows' and then it will be all done. And then I will hold you. I will hold you and tell you that it will be all done."

Be confident that the degree of pain you're inflicting is appropriate. Don't apply too little pain, because it won't be effective at rescuing. Don't apply an unnecessary degree of pain. In order to feel confident about the appropriateness of what I'm doing when I give my daughter a 'pow-pow,' I use my bare hand on their bare bottom. I don't use a wooden spoon, paddle or any other object. I learned from my dad to use my hand. He said it allowed him to feel how hard the 'pow-pow' was. In order to feel how hard my 'pow-pows' are I've practiced 'pow-powing' different parts of my body to feel the degree of pain that I'm inflicting. Additionally (as embarrassing as it is to mention this publicly) I've also let my wife give me a 'pow-pow' on my bare bottom. I do this to help her know what is too soft and what is too hard. The point is be intentional and thoughtful about the degree of appropriate pain that you use.

Since you should never use 'pow-pows' to vent your own emotions, never give a 'pow-pow' if you are angry or frustrated. Give yourself a time out. Pray until you can remember that giving a 'pow-pow' should be a loving way of rescuing your child from danger.

After you've explained what's going to happen, tell your child, "Okay, I'm going to give you the 3 'pow-pows' now and then I'll hold you. It's going to hurt but then it's going to be all done."

At this point I gently, but firmly lay my daughter over my lap. I gently, and discretely bare her bottom. I quickly give her the 'pow-pows' with the appropriate and thoughtful amount of force. I quickly cover her bottom and sweep her up into my arms while saying things like, "It's all done. It's all done. No more 'pow-pow.' I don't ever want there to be more 'pow-pows.' I want the disobeying to be all done. Just do what Daddy says all the time. It will be happiest in our house when you say, "Yes Daddy, I will do what you say." It will be happiest when you obey Daddy fast. Etc. etc." Of course, while I'm saying these things my daughter is crying. I calm her and hold her until she is done crying.

#### **4- In our family 'pow-pows' lead to gospel conversations.**

After she's done crying I teach her about the blessings of obedience until I'm convinced that she's not valuing self-rule like she was in the moment of disobedience. After the teaching is done I tell her that we are going to try obeying again. I bring her back to the location of her previous disobedience. I repeat the instruction that was previously disobeyed and expect her to obey.

Usually before we move on I also pray for her. I take some moments to explain realities of the gospel to her. I tell her that Jesus can help her obey when it's hard. I coach her to ask Jesus

for help when she doesn't want to obey Daddy. Some very important gospel conversations can happen right after a 'pow-pow' has been given.

### **Concluding thoughts on using appropriate pain to rescue**

If you are unsure of why and how to give a 'pow-pow,' hold off. Talk with your spouse about details like the ones listed in the paragraphs on the previous pages. If it seems too confusing, talk to someone you respect. Using appropriate pain to rescue should not be a confusing thing. It should be a life-giving thing for you and your child. Take it very seriously because your discipline should be focused not on outward behavior but the important inward conditions of your child's heart.

# - CHAPTER 11 -

## THE GOAL OF PARENTING

The other night, after the kids' bedtime, I was playing some worship songs on the piano and wondering why I pray for my children or why I teach them what's right and wrong.

- Is my goal for them to have the best life possible?
- Do I want them to avoid emotional suffering in the future?
- Is my hope that they will turn out well so that others praise me for being a good dad?

I guess I'm like LOTS of moms and dads who do LOTS of things for their kids for LOTS of different reasons. And some of those reasons aren't so noble.

The goals parents can have:	What it teaches children:
"Let's just try to make it through this day/stage." "We'll be happier when the kids are out of the house."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...to value comfort or relaxation.</li> <li>• "I'm happier without responsibility."</li> </ul>
"I want my child to be better off in life as a result of being prettier, more athletic, more social/popular or more successful than I was."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "The 'best life' comes when I receive affirmation from other people. Their affirmation will help me have the emotional security I crave."</li> </ul>
"I want my children to be 'good.' That will help others think well of our family and of my parenting."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "There's a high expectation for my behavior. My parents' good standing (in our social/religious circles) is at stake."</li> <li>• You can love people for the wrong reasons. Can you really call it love if what you're doing is using people to feel better about yourself?</li> </ul>
"I live in fear that my children will have the same emotional struggles that I had when I was young."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pain in life should be avoided.</li> <li>• Experiences of pain in life are God-less. "I don't believe pain can be</li> </ul>

	a tool in God's plan of redemption/sanctification."
"I want my children to be involved in church because it will help them _____." (get to heaven, avoid hell, have a good life, be a Christian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious activity is all about, "what can God and religion do for me?"</li> </ul>

I'm realizing that I SHOULDN'T be primarily motivated by small goals/ends/life-stories. Instead I should be motivated by the most worthwhile goals. And someone once told me that...:

**...the most worthwhile motivation is to be motivated by what motivates God.**

God isn't most motivated to help us:

- get to heaven.
- avoid hell.
- be popular.
- be accepted by our peers.
- avoid pain.
- get involved in church activity.
- have a 'good life' as defined by what our culture says a 'good life' is.

So what DOES motivate God?

John Piper said,

"I would like to try to persuade you that the chief end of God is to glorify God and enjoy himself forever. Or to put it another way: the chief end of God is to enjoy glorifying himself."



I love that! A quick glance at some of the rest of Piper's sermon (scan the qr code) makes me think that it's a beautiful and loving chief end for Him to have. The most valuable thing God can value is the further revelation of His glory. This has always been His motivation and always will be His motivation. AND it's the only thing that should motivate all of our actions as a human beings.

These truths makes lyrics, like the ones from this song, very important.

"It's all about you, Jesus,  
and all this is for you;

for your glory and your fame.  
 It's not about me  
 as if you should do things my way.  
 You alone are God and I surrender to your ways.”

-written by Paul Oakley for Kingsway

The reason behind what we do as parents should be to help our children grow up to be able to sing songs like these from their hearts. We should lead them in such a way that they're able to declare the truth of this song, not just inside a church building, but by the way they live their lives and make their decisions.

Romans 8:20-25 teaches us that we will experience futility if our parenting is all about things less than the glory of God. Even our 'Christian homes' will be characterized by powerlessness because God is not willing to support anything less noble than the further revelation of His glory.

The sobering yet exciting reality is this:

**Anything we do is pointless if God's not doing it.**

**If anything we do in life is not motivated by what motivates God, we'll find ourselves spinning our wheels.**

It will feel like:

- trying to pushing a boulder up a never-ending mountain.
- trying to use your body to block the ocean waves from coming to the shore.
- fighting a forest fire with a bucket of water.
- getting all of the laundry and dishes done! :)

Try with all your might, but you aren't going to get anywhere. (Except for maybe the laundry.)

Sobering, right? At least for me it is. Without even realizing it, there are SO many times when I parent for the wrong reasons!

However, the good news is that I CAN REPENT. I can give up parenting for the wrong reasons. Everyday I can turn and ask God to help me parent for the right reasons. The exciting thing for all of us is that as soon as we do, we'll experience amazing, supernatural things in our families. It will feel like surfing the waves rather than trying to block them with our bodies.

Here's why:

When God wants to do something, He accomplishes His purposes with an awesome display of power.

- He wanted to make Earth. He spoke, and it came into existence.

- He wanted to wipe humankind off of the face of the earth with a flood. He did.
- He wanted human beings to experience freedom. He sent Jesus to cancel the power that keeps us in bondage

**God is really good at having the ability to do things that He wants done.**

Job 23 says this about God:

“But He is unchangeable, and who can turn Him back?

What He desires, that He does.

**14** For He will complete what He appoints for me,  
and many such things are in His mind.”

This is exciting news for us because ***since God wants us to be Radiance Parents, He will release an awesome measure of His power for us and our families.***

Parenting DOES have it's exhausting side. God doesn't mind that parenting IS OVERWHELMING at times. BUT, parenting doesn't have to be a losing battle. Radiance Parents can be weak (not knowing what to do) AND ride the wave of God's strength/power as they align themselves His purpose to reveal His glorious self to the next generation.

This means that:

- God will do miracles in our kids lives.
- God will use us to bless our children despite our weakness.
- God will give us strength that we don't have to help our children know and see God.
- God will shower down His grace over what happens in our homes.
- We don't have to be hopeless when I go to God in prayer or read His word.
- We don't have to feel that knowing God will be like pushing a boulder up a mountain.
- We don't have to be discouraged when people say, “Parents of infants don't have much time to spend with God.”
- We don't have to believe that there's a spiritual ceiling above our heads keeping me from connecting with God.
- God wants us to be with Him.
- God will meet with us.
- God will show us what He's like.
- God will talk to us.
- God wants us to experience His manifest presence in corporate worship times.
- God wants our encounters with the truth of the gospel to liberate us from the bondage of our pasts.
- God wants His work in us to be seen by our children in a way that draws them to Himself.
- Our days aren't meaningless. They are full of purpose and excitement around each corner.

There's so much hope for your family.

Since God wants your precious children to know Him, He will be more than glad to reveal Himself to you. Have hope that you'll find God as you seek Him. If you take one small step towards Him, you'll soon see that He's already taken big steps towards you.

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