

Gospel Parenting

7 Questions We All Need Help Answering

1. What is the goal of parenting?

The goal of parenting is to raise kids who "Love God with all their heart, soul and strength"

- *"Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. 5 And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. 6 And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. 7 Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. 8 Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. 9 Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Deuteronomy 6:4-9*
- *"Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?" Jesus replied, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment." Matthew 22:36-40*

Since the goal is for our kids to follow God with all they are, we need to accept that this will not always fit the world's view of "success." We are not trying to control our kids or "make" them be good, but instead guiding them toward a life of freedom and fulfillment in Jesus.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/getting-to-the-heart-of-parenting-with-paul-tripp/>

2. How do you balance sports and family commitments?

Pray before each season and submit your decision to participate before Jesus as Lord. Then be willing to thoughtfully consider and listen to God's direction on what is most important for your family

- Submit to Jesus as Lord in all things includes our extracurricular commitments. Talk with your kids as you choose the things you will be involved in as a family - and say no to things that are not as important.
- God does not want us to be over-scheduled since it takes our attention away from Him and his calling on our lives (Luke 10:38-42, Genesis 2:7)
- God also doesn't want us to be sluggards - we are given passions and gifts and God commands us to use those well and for His glory.

If you are led to sign your kids up for a sport or activity, equip your kids by doing themed devotionals with them before games or meetings. Keep in mind that any activity can be done for the glory of ourselves or the glory of God.

- *"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)*
- Tool: Online Athlete Devotionals by FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes) <https://fcaresources.com/search/site?retain-filters=1&f%5B0%5D=type%3Adevotional>
 - Sample Devotional "Above-Reproach" <http://fcaresources.com/devotional/above-reproach>

See yourselves as the presence of Christ to the other players and parents.

- Set an example as a parent who does not complain about the coach or referees and supports your child no matter their performance. (*Ephesians 1:22-23, Matthew 5:14*)
- Equip your kids how not to complain during practice or in games. Help them lead by example and help them gladly follow their coach's instructions and be a positive team member.
- Prioritize spiritual conversations. Games and activities provide opportunities to share with people who don't know Jesus and time to connect with your kids (ie in the car on the way)
- Glorify God by "*doing everything without grumbling or complaining*" (*Philippians 2:14*)
 - "*Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ must look out on the world. Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which He is to bless His people.*" - Prayer of St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)

3. How much screen time should you give your kids, and what content do you protect them from?

Talk with your kids about the positives and negatives of the internet.

- Just because you can do something does not mean you should do something. Adam and Eve had the opportunity to eat the fruit, but they should not have taken it. (*Genesis 2:16-17, James 1:17, 1Cor 6:12*)
- The internet is filled with light and darkness. Stay in the light. (*John 12:35, Proverbs 4:19-20*)

Limit the amount of time

- <https://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/03/21/a-reconsideration-of-children-and-screen-time/>

Limit the time of day

- Examples: no devices in bedrooms at night, no screens before school, no screens before 7am on weekends
- <https://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/07/06/screen-addiction-is-taking-a-toll-on-children/>

Limit the content. Remember that even basic search engines have news reels that may not have appropriate content for kids.

- Use a site like <http://www.common sense media.org> to check the content of shows or movies kids want to view before they view it.
- Use a filter like <https://www.netnanny.com/>, or safe mode settings for your search engine, to limit the pages kids can access. If NetNanny senses a page is inappropriate it will require a password. Without a password it will not let your kid go there. This helps protect them from accessing something inappropriate either intentionally or by accident.
- Use a kid friendly search engine. Common Sense Media has reviews of some of the top kid friendly search engine. <https://www.common sense media.org/lists/kid-safe-browsers-and-search-sites>

- Learn How to disable Web Browsing on iPhones and iPads. That way you can give them a device to play a game without worrying they will surf the web. <https://support.x3watch.com/hc/en-us/articles/204195570-How-do-I-disableSafari-on-my-iOS-device->

Monitor the content. Be open with your kids about how/when/why you monitor use.

- Know what your kids have been looking at by checking the history. Software like Covenant Eyes, SafeEyes, and x3watch.com will track all your sites and send you an accountability report so you can see everything that has been accessed.
- Keep the family device(s) in a public spot. Consider family rules about using devices in bedrooms (keep doors open, only during certain hours, etc)

Teach you kids what to do when they stumble upon something inappropriate or outside what they should be viewing. Have a plan and make yourself a safe person to tell.

<https://www.covenanteyes.com/2013/11/20/internet-safety-christian-solutions/>

4. How can you help your kids love God?

- Pray for them - consider a daily prayer routine on your own or with your family
- Pray with them - make prayer a normal part of life
- Track with Soma Kids curriculum - Go to the App store and get [The Bible App for Kids](#)
- Study the Bible with them - it can be short and sweet.
 - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/teach-kids-study-bible/>
 - [Jesus Storybook Bible](#)
 - [Action Bible](#)
 - [Exploring the Bible Together Plan](#)
- Involve them in your mission to others
 - Include them in MC service, choose a family donation for Christmas (World Vision has some great options), support a child (Compassion International, etc), have them take ownership in serving their community (donating toys/clothes, prep meals/food at a food bank)
- Avoid idols in your own life (Deuteronomy 4:15-23, 1John 5:21)
 - Consider how to be generous with your finances and possessions
 - Practice a "Sabbath," or day/half day of rest
 - Be intentional with use of technology
- Worship God as a family
 - Family Sunday- it comes every fourth Sunday. Look at these resources to prepare <http://www.somaissaquah.org/family-sunday>
 - Plan a family devotional, prayer, and/or quiet time
 - Make sure everyone has access to a Bible - consider reading the Bible aloud together
- Connect with your kids! Plan one-on-one time or surprise them for a special occasion.

EXCURSUS: JOHN WESTERHOFF III AND THE STAGES OF FAITH

EXPERIENCED FAITH (pre-school and early childhood)

This is what 'we' do This is how 'we' act.

It is a time of imitation (child prays the Lord's prayer without understanding the meaning of all the words)

AFFILIATIVE FAITH (childhood and early adolescent years)

"This is what 'we' believe and do. This is "our" group/church.

It is a time of belonging to a group...a time which centers around the imitation of the group

SEARCHING FAITH (late adolescence)

"Is this what 'I' believe?"

This is the time of asking questions...not blindly accepting what others have said. This stage of faith is adding the 'head' to the 'heart' of the earlier states.

OWNED FAITH (early adulthood)

"This is what 'I' believe."

This stage only comes through the searching stage. This is the strong, personal faith that one witnesses to and is willing to die for.

5. What should you do when your kid says, "No"?

It is our job as parents to guide our children. We need to speak the truth in love and not out of a need for control or desire to prove ourselves.

- Sometimes we ask our kids questions when we are really giving an instruction (Do you want to unload the dishwasher? Can you help me make dinner?) Being clear about our expectations can help ease conflict and reduce confusion.
- Take a moment to get yourself calm and centered when your child does not follow directions. This will help you operate out of a place of love rather than anger.
- <https://connectedfamilies.org/> has great resources about parenting with a Gospel-focused lens

Children are called to submit to their parents (*Colossians 3:20, Ephesians 6:1-5*)

- Discipline is not mean. It is loving to discipline our children and show them how to live well (*Genesis 18:19, Proverbs 13:24, Proverbs 19:18, Proverbs 22:6, Proverbs 22:15, Proverbs 23:13-14, Proverbs 19:15-17*)
- <http://www.paultripp.com/articles/posts/happy-child-easy-life>
- Have clear boundaries and consequences as a family for how to respond to defiance and refusal to listen/follow directions. If this is a consistent challenge for your family, seek out resources and/or professionals to help you as parents come up with a vision and plan to lead your kids.

6. How do you help your kids stay sexually pure without being naïve?

Read Proverbs 4-7

Talk to your kids about sex in age appropriate ways. Be the first to do it, before their friends or their teachers. Talk to them before they start having questions - make you as parents the safe place for reliable information.

- This topic can start to be introduced in early childhood and expanded upon as they get older. <https://www.biblicalparenting.org/learningaboutsex.asp> has several books and series to introduce the topic gradually.
- Consider this three minute teaching video from John Mark Comer on the biblical view of "What is Sex" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bF_5wbmrEsc
- Explain that God created sex as part of his good creation in to be enjoyed between a man and a woman in the covenant of marriage. (*Genesis 2: 24-25*)

Keep in mind that our world promotes both obsession with sex and shame around sex. As you talk to your kids, remember that God created sex to be an important part of connection and intimacy in marriage.

- Define adultery for them as when you have sex with someone outside of the marriage covenant. God warns us not to do it in the Ten Commandments. (*Exodus 20:14*)
- He tells us not to commit adultery in the same way a parent tells their kid not to touch a hot stove. He loves us and wants to protect us from heartbreak and disease by saving sex for marriage.
- Help them also see that God also cares about our thought life and looking at someone lustfully is adultery of the heart (*Matthew 5:27-30*)
- Help them see their body is a gift from God to be used in many ways, but primarily for the glory of God. (*1 Corinthians 6:18-20*)
- Sex outside of marriage can cause challenges with seeing your body as God's good creation as well as with connection and intimacy in marriage later.
- In John 8 it shows us how Jesus treats sexual sin - He forgives it and he calls us to leave it behind. "*Neither do I condemn you. Now Go and leave your life of sin*"
 - Jesus does not condemn anyone for their sin. He offers forgiveness. We should not condemn ourselves or others for any kind of sin, including sexual sin.
- [biblicalparenting.org https://www.biblicalparenting.org/learningaboutsex.asp](https://www.biblicalparenting.org/learningaboutsex.asp)
- What is Sex? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bF_5wbmrEsc
- How to talk to your kids about Homosexuality <http://www.ccv.org/wpcontent/uploads/2010/04/FOCUS-how-to-talk-to-yourchildren-homosexuality-sept14.pdf>

7. How do I raise my kids in community?

We are not designed to raise our kids on our own! We need Godly people to speak into our kids' lives.

- Recruit allies in your family
grandparents, aunts, uncles who follow Jesus to encourage and speak truth to your kids
- Recruit allies in your MC
Example: Christina Davis initiates a hang out with our oldest daughter once a month to bond and to talk about spiritual things
- Recruit allies in the church
Example: 4th and 5th grade boys and their Dads hang out once a month for things like kickball and pizza, or wall-ball
- Rely on your greatest ally - the Holy Spirit. Pray consistently for your kids.

Online Resources

Thegospelcoalition.org

Biblicalparenting.org

Connectedfamilies.org

<https://gospelcenteredfamily.com/>

Podcasts

<https://www.truthloveparent.com/the-best-podcasts-for-christian-parents.html>

<https://connectedfamilies.org/featured/connected-families-podcast-2/>

<https://dontmomalone.com/>

<https://www.risenmotherhood.com/podcast>