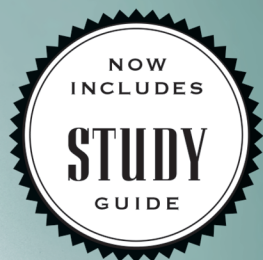


HOW A FATHER CAN ANCHOR HIS FAMILY
IN CHRIST FOR THE NEXT 100 YEARS

ANCHOR MAN



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AUTHOR OF THE BESTSELLER POINT MAN

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

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ANCHOR MAN

STUDY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

1

ANCHORING THE FAMILY CHAIN

Anchors Are Important

Every ship has an anchor. It is put there for a reason. It is the anchor that holds the ship exactly where it needs to be and keeps the ship from drifting. The anchor chain connects the ship to the anchor with strong steel links secured in the bowels of the ship, and if you follow the anchor chain, link by link, you will eventually come to the anchor.

Can you identify with being the anchor of your family?
What does the thought of an anchor represent in your life?
Does it represent you as you are now to your family, or as you would like to be?

What If There Is No Anchor?

“A drifting family is a family without an anchor. The father is the anchor of the family. And when fathers leave or when fathers continually degrade their wives and children, the family begins to drift.”

What are some of the phrases you would hear from a father who regularly degrades his family?

What are the likely effects on children, who grow up in a drifting family?

Do you know someone who is in a drifting family?

If so, talk about some of the outward signs that you have observed in that family's members. (Suggestions: attitudes, appearance, behavior).

Write down on a separate piece of paper at least three ways that you can monitor your own speech and actions to avoid becoming a “drifting father.”

Creating the Links

If the father is the anchor, what is the family?

Have you ever thought of your family as the last link in a very long chain of links, stretching back for perhaps thousands of years?

Or, how about your family as the first link in a long family chain that is still to come?

How far back can you trace your links?

Is there any value to passing on this history to your own kids and how can you be sure this is not overlooked?

There Are Instructions for the Fathers

Reread Deuteronomy 6:1-2 and discuss who has the responsibility to become the family anchor and why God set it up that way.

If you had a teenage daughter and she asked you why the father is commanded by God to anchor the family, instead of the mother, how would you answer her?

“God expects each father to anchor his family for at least one hundred years.”

Why one hundred years? Why not forty, fifty or seventy five years? What’s so special about one hundred years?

What is probably the largest deterrent to a father who is trying to anchor his family?

How Deuteronomy 6 Really Works

“And as (Joe Israel) gets older, it becomes more and more clear to him that the reason his father is such a great father is that God is at the center of his life.”

There is no real secret to how Deuteronomy 6 really works. If the father is anchored in God, then the father will anchor the family.

Think introspectively is God really at the center of your life?

Do you consult Him daily about the events in your life?

Do you seek His will in all your decisions?

Discuss how you hope the godly influences you implant in your family will live on after you.

Are You the First Anchor in Your Family?

Are you the first man in your family to come to Christ?

Maybe you don't have any previous family links that set godly examples for you. If so, now what?

How can a father who had no anchor in his house when he was a child expect to become a strong anchor for his own family?

How is it possible that some families with no apparent godly influence in their daily lives still seem to lead decent, moral lives?

What might be the source of their morality?

Discuss the differences between a Christ-based family and a family that simply “honors family values.”

Would a moral, but non-Christian, family be more vulnerable to the snares and pitfalls of the world than a family anchored in Christ? Why or why not?

Why Compound Interest Should Have Your Interest

Can you explain compound interest as used in the secular world?

How do we use this same principle to build *spiritual* compound interest? Explain how you are the beneficiary of spiritual compound interest from your own family chain. (father, grandfather, uncle, and so on).

Spiritual capital is the result of _____ .

What have you done today to increase your spiritual capital?

List three ways you can add daily to the spiritual capital of your family:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

God loves to pour out His love on a man who loves Him with a whole heart! God will bless that man's children, and his children's children. It's called spiritual compound interest.

Ephesians 2:4–9, says that salvation is through the grace of God, “not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”

Does this mean that we should cut back on our good works because it is by grace that we are saved?

Is the good that you do measured in another way? How?

The Lesson of the Bamboo

It is interesting to note that the patience and wisdom described in this chapter are only required to grow a superior, high-grade

bamboo. Apparently, inferior grades need less involvement and yield lesser results.

Do you ever tire of being the spiritual anchor because you don't see immediate results?

Can you visualize how the patient feeding and nurturing of the bamboo relates to what you must do to achieve similar high-quality results with your own family?

Where can you look for reinforcement and encouragement?

It's personal inventory time!

Think about what kind of a link you have been in your family chain.

List three of your strong points and how you can enhance them further:

List three of your weak points and why you believe they are areas for improvement:

List the spiritual traits that you are successfully passing on to the next generation.

If your list is coming up short, what can you do, starting today, to make up your spiritual deficiency?

And remember, God rewards His faithful men.

2

IT TAKES MORE THAN SPERM

It takes more than sperm to be a father. It takes commitment.” Being a father these days is a lot tougher than it was just one or two generations ago. There are so many new distractions to turn a father’s attention away from his family. Everything from blatant sex in movies, temptations at the workplace, and watching TV to excess, to working so many hours there is just no time for family. There is evidence accumulating that some people are even becoming addicted to the Internet and the electronic smorgasbord of the World Wide Web.

Your Absence Breeds Consequences

Can you name all the things in your life that separate you from your family? List them all, no matter how trivial some might seem.

Talk with each other about this to be sure that as many “family separators” as possible are found.

Now, assign a priority to each thing on the list according to its priority in your lifestyle. (Use the old, but tried-and-true, method of giving letters of the alphabet to each item: *A* for most important; *B* for somewhat important; *C* for routine tasks and *D* for things that are not very important.)

Now that you have written an *A*, *B*, *C*, or *D* next to everything on your list, review it and think about the priorities you have given to each task.

1. Which things take you away from your family the most?
2. How many *C* and *D* items are consuming inordinate amounts of your time?

3. How could you reorganize, or eliminate, certain *C* and *D* items to free up more time for family?

4. How many things don't really need to be on the list because other family members should do them at more appropriate times?

Do the same thing with the *A* and *B* items. These will probably include things like your job, volunteer community activities, and hobbies. Look at the *A* and *B* items when you have time at home to seriously think about them.

Don't forget to ask your wife for input on this. After all, she's been watching your activities for a long time, hasn't she? Besides, this may be your chance to earn brownie points when she finds you are making an effort to spend more time as an involved father!

Yes, It's True, Satan's After You.

"If you are a father, Satan is out to get your hide. Father's are the key and he knows that."

Satan doesn't waste his time on those already lost. If you are an involved father, living at home with a wife and the standard 1.8 children per household, why would you be a prime target for the enemy?

Talk about why the attitude "this could never happen to me" can be very dangerous when dealing with Satan.

No Fault vs. Your Fault

Divorce is the biggest destroyer of the American family. "No-fault divorce says that a marriage can be destroyed at the whim of one partner. And it's nobody's fault."

Do people get divorced because they think enduring the hardships of a strained marriage is worse than the hardships of ending it?

How has our society looked upon divorce in the last fifty years?
What has changed?

Are you willing to stay in your marriage, *no matter what*, even if faced with an unfaithful spouse? Why?

God has set the standard on the issue of divorce. Read Malachi 2:16 and see what God says about divorce.

Are you setting the standard in your marriage that will assure there will never be a divorce?

“When divorce enters into a family chain, it tends to stay there - unless Jesus Christ intervenes.”

Even though you may think of your marriage as strong, do you pray every day for continued spiritual strength and wisdom for you and your spouse and the continuing success of your marriage?

Why should you pray for something that is already working well?

Discuss the meaning of Genesis 2:24.

In a strained marriage, how far should a father go along with this Scripture before giving up?

“Call out to Christ and ask for His help, and He will give you the power to do the right thing.”

Someone Must Take the First Step . . .

. . . and it should be you! “God has told you where to begin.”

Discuss how men living in troubled marriages can implement the three steps given in this chapter. Read the Scripture verses aloud as you go.

“He’s your Father. And if you’ll listen up, He’ll not only make you a better father . . . He will forge you into an Anchor.”

3

PLYMOUTH ROCK COACHING CLINIC

“Strong, balanced male leaders produce strong, balanced male leaders.”

See if you can think of at least one male role model in each of these areas of your life. Write their names at the end of the numbered lines:

1. In your job or business:
2. In your church:
3. In your community:
4. In your family:

What was it, or is it, about these men that made them a role model to you?

Are you doing all you can to be a role model for the younger men around you? If your answer is yes, explain how you're doing it.

If your answer is no, discuss with the group how you can receive coaching to be a better role model.

A Coach in the Hand Is Worth Two Wild Guesses.

Explain the principle of “Speed Modeling.”

Compare Speed Modeling with a popular business term called cloning. How might cloning differ from Speed Modeling?

(Hint: most large chain store operations make big use of cloning.)

Talk about how Speed Modeling works and come up with the names of three individuals or companies who are known for their Speed Modeling abilities.

Complete these sentences:

1. If I wanted to learn more about finances, I would
_____.
2. If I wanted to know more about fixing a car, I would
_____.
3. If I wanted to know more about computers, I would
_____.
4. If I wanted to know more about being a godly father, I would
_____.

The answers to all of the above boil down to going where the information can be found. You will seek out and question someone you trust and someone who is very knowledgeable on the subject. In short, *you will find an expert*. If you don't happen to know any experts, then you will seek out what experts have written in books.

To know more about being a godly father, you would consult the Bible, where the greatest Expert of them all has laid out a plan for you.

Do We Need More Puritans?

The Puritans were a large group of people who put the Word of God ahead of everything else in their lives and tried to live according to the Lord's standards of conduct.

Discuss what daily life might have been like as Puritan father living in the late seventeenth century in what would become America.

What would your workday be like?

Your family life?

Your church?

Why does the modern world ridicule the “Puritan ethic”?

After reading about the Puritan father’s responsibility as the spiritual leader, teacher, and provider for his family, are you willing to become a modern-day Puritan father?

History tells us the Puritan family was centered on a God-fearing, Bible-teaching father. At approximately what point in our history did men begin to relinquish their family leadership roles?

In the 1830s, what forces were at work to diminish a father’s role in the family?

What forces are at work to diminish a father’s role in the family today?

Sorry, But You’ve Been Disconnected

“So what has happened to fathering since the Puritans (Pilgrims) landed at Plymouth Rock? . . . Fathers got disconnected.”

What are the three ways a father becomes disconnected from his family?

What kind of connections did you have with your dad (physical, emotional, or spiritual)?

In looking back, what do you wish had been different in the connections with your own father?

How have the memories of these connections, or the lack of them, affected the relationship you have with your kids, especially your sons?

Can you honestly say that you have a connection with your children? If not, can you put your finger on the place in time where the connection was broken, where the weak link in the family chain failed?

It's Time to Reconnect!

Put some serious thought into listing on a sheet of paper several things that have disconnected you from your children. They could be physical things, like working, or emotional things, like aloofness. Save the sheet of paper. Do this before you continue.

Now that you have a list of things that have caused a disconnection between you and your kids, you are ready to reconnect with them.

The secret to reconnecting with your children is short and simple: "But if you and I are going to connect with our kids, we have to be physically present with them." You can't effectively father in absentia.

Using the list of activities in this chapter (and any others you can think of) talk about how you can work several of these activities into your daily life to begin that important reconnection.

Coach, Coach, Then Coach Some More

"There are good coaches and there are lousy coaches."

What is the difference between the two?

What makes a lousy coach a lousy coach?

Could it be he or she had no proper coaching for his or her self and is now just passing it on?

If you have a son or daughter active in sports, have you asked them what they think about their coaches?

Whatever their answer, can they explain why they feel the way they do about their coaches?

Things Work Better If You Have a Plan

Of course, there are other kinds of coaching besides the physical coaching found in sports. It is likely that the spiritual and emotional coaching your kids receive from you will have a far greater impact on their lives than any physical coaching you could give them.

With that in mind, return to the section “50 Ways to Coach Your Children.” It’s included below for reference.

With pen in hand, write a *Y* for yes, or an *N* for no, in the left margin next to each coaching tip, depending on what kind of a coaching job you think you are doing on that topic (some tips may not be appropriate due to a child’s age, but are something to think about for the future). For example, number 1 is “Coach them how to pray.” If you think you’re already doing a pretty good job on this, then write a *Y* in the left margin. This is going to take some time if you do it right, so you will probably want to review the list over more than one session.

Now comes the really important part. After you have entered your *Y*’s and *N*’s for all 50 coaching tips, make a separate list of all the *N* entries. When finished, you will have a list of the things you need to work on to build a stronger link in your family chain. Over time and with this list, you can work out a plan to change those *N*’s to *Y*’s!

50 WAYS TO COACH YOUR CHILDREN

So where do you begin? And just exactly what does a coach do? Let me throw out fifty coaching tips that might help you get jump-started. Some of these are for younger kids and some are for older. You could definitely add to this list; it’s just a starting point. But these are fifty tangible and concrete things that you can do. And it will make a difference.

1. Coach them how to pray.
2. Coach them that the most important book in all the world is the Bible—and that they should read it every day.
3. Coach them in how to buy a car by taking them with you the next time you buy one.
4. Coach them in how to use the library.
5. Coach them in how to stand up to a bully and defend themselves.
6. Coach your sons that men protect women.
7. Coach them about money—at least 10 percent to God, 10 percent to savings, live off the rest (and while they are under your roof, they can take 10 percent for spending money and bank the other 70 percent).
8. Coach them to never make a major purchase without thinking about it for *at least* twenty-four hours.
9. Coach them to dribble with their left hand.
10. Coach them ahead of time how to handle pornography.
11. Coach your daughters that there are two kinds of beauty—outside and inside—and that inside is more important to you and God.
12. Coach them to respect and obey authority—parents, teachers, police officers, etc.
13. Coach them to be kind to the kids at school whom other kids make fun of.
14. Coach them not to cheat on homework or tests.
15. Coach them to immediately return the money when they have been given too much change.
16. Coach them to do a job right—the first time.
17. Coach them to open the door for their mother.
18. Coach them to share their victories, joys, sorrows, defeats, and hurt with you. You do that, by the way, by listening.

19. Coach them to do what's right when no one else is around because Jesus is always around. And Jesus will reward them because they have character.
20. Coach them not to lie—before they get into the habit.
21. Coach them that some things are more important than sports—like Sunday worship.
22. Coach them to change their oil every 3,000 miles—and get your daughter a cell phone when she starts driving (trust me on this . . . you'll have a better quality of life).
23. Coach them to say no to movies that their friends, even their Christian friends, say yes to.
24. Coach your son to be a gentleman.
25. Coach your daughter to be a lady.
26. Coach your son to tie a tie and polish his shoes—before he's thirty.
27. Coach them that when you say no you mean no.
28. Coach them that it's pretty great to kiss your wife.
29. Coach them that their very best friend ever will always be Jesus.
30. Coach them to call home if they'll be late—and to keep the battery charged on the cell phone.
31. Coach them to stand alone.
32. Coach them that they aren't followers—they are leaders.
33. Coach them that it's better to be respected than popular.
34. Coach them that motherhood is the most important job in the world and definitely more important than a career.
35. Coach them that it's a father's job to provide for his family.
36. Coach them that God wants men to lead in the home and in the church.

37. Coach them to never give personal information to someone they don't know on the phone.
38. Coach them that even if they do make it to the NBA, they are going to have to do something else for the next forty years.
39. Coach them that good daddies hug and kiss but they also spank, and they make sure to hug and kiss after they spank.
40. Coach them to know what to look for in a husband.
41. Coach them to know what to look for in a wife.
42. Coach your daughter that both God and you think she is very, very, valuable—and she won't act cheap.
43. Coach your son to keep his hands off his date.
44. Coach them how to handle a checking account by letting them have one when they are in high school.
45. Coach them to love people and use things—instead of the other way around.
46. Coach them to measure twice—and saw once.
47. Coach them that Daddy will never leave Mommy.
48. Coach them that the narrow way is always the best way.
49. Coach them that there is nothing they could ever do that would make you stop loving them.
50. Coach them that there is nothing they could ever do that would make God stop loving them.

That ought to keep you busy for a while.

4

CONFUSED CHRISTIAN KIDS

“So why are these good, well-meaning Christian kids having such a hard time living out their beliefs?”

How is being a teenager today different from when you were a teenager?

Do you feel secure about your child’s Christian foundation because they go to church regularly and attend youth group meetings? What’s wrong with that?

When was the last time you spoke with your kids about moral issues that may have confused them?

What might some of these issues be?

If Christian kids are in trouble because they are confused over what is right and what is wrong, then what is the source of their confusion? “They are in trouble because they are being raised in a wilderness. A moral and spiritual wilderness.”

In nature, a person who leads you out of a wilderness is called a guide. The person who leads a child out of a moral wilderness is called a _____ .

List several characteristics a father-guide must have to bring his children through society’s moral wilderness.

What Will You Leave Behind?

If you died today, what would family and friends have to say about you? Would you leave behind a legacy of truth and godly living that would be the model that would forge future links in your family chain and develop anchors for future generations? Think about it.

Read aloud as a group Deuteronomy 6:1–7 and discuss its implications for fathers' lives.

Can you find a correlation between what the Israelites faced when they first entered the promised land and what we face today in our housing subdivisions?

Take another look at the traits God is developing in Christian men across our nation and see if you recognize these traits in yourself. Do you see these traits in the men you know and spend time with?

If you don't, should you be concerned?

How Many Gods Do You Have?

Remember the first commandment? It says, "You shall have no other gods before Me."

Name things that have become gods for some fathers?

If you have done bad things in the past, will God pour out His wrath on your children and grandchildren? What is the basis for your answer?

You Must Love God with Your Whole Heart

What are the problems of a father who loves God half-heartedly, who is a reader of the Word but not a doer of the Word?

What are the chances this father will establish a strong Christian link in his family chain?

What is meant by the statement, “The Word of God is to be in a father’s heart”?

“The best thing I can do to encourage my children to be in the Word is to be in the Word myself.”

Have you set aside a period of time each day for bible study and/or devotional reading? If not, why not?

Name at least three things you can do to ensure that your teachings are built on bedrock and not sand.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Putting an End to Confusion

When a son or a daughter is confused about their Christian identity, what are their main sources of information and guidance? How many can you come up with? This is so important that I will give you the answer: If you have said anything except ME, then you are wrong.

You must be a father who not only teaches the truth, but also does the truth. If you only teach the truth and do not live the truth, *you will be found out by your children.*

Why?

“Is your personal behavior confusing your kids about the truth? Or is your personal behavior explaining the truth of Jesus Christ to your children? The ball, my friend, is in your court.”

Which is it for you?

5

NASCAR FATHERING

“When a child is born into your home, you have just eighteen years to do the job of a father.” Subtract the current age of your child from eighteen. (I’m not kidding, subtract the current age of your child from eighteen. Now, please.) What answer did you get? 10? 8? 16? 5?

Whatever it is, what is the significance of that number to you?

Some people say that as fathers we have even less time to build the spiritual and emotional foundation that will carry our children for the rest of their lives. Revisit the comment by Anne Ortlund.

Just what does this “wet cement” theory mean?

If true, what are its implications for the father of a young child?

Time Flies.

In the list below, circle the most difficult thing for you to provide for your children.

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|------------|
| 1. Food | 2. Clothing | 3. Shelter |
| 4. Medical care | 5. Your time | |

How many in the group chose something other than number 5?

What percentage of the group chose number 5?

Is there a common thread running through the choices?

If so, is it good or bad, and what can you do about it?

Think about the study by Dr. Nicholi.

What is an “acceptable” amount of time to spend daily with your kids?

What do you think of quality time versus quantity time?

Put some thought into setting aside a certain time each day, or night, just to be physically present with your children. If you’re not doing this now, what change in your lifestyle would be needed to make it happen?

Pit-stop Daddies

Explain what a NASCAR father is.

How does one come to be a NASCAR father?

Name three things that will tip you off on whether you are now, or are becoming, a NASCAR father.

“The enemy loves to take Christian fathers and get their careers out of balance.”

Has your career ever been sent into a tailspin?

Would you call what happened to you a “distraction” from your family, or worse?

Why are hardworking, responsible fathers prime candidates for distractions that separate them from their families?

Read John Ruskin’s prescription for work.

List five reasons why fathers work. I’ll give you the easy answer, you fill in the rest.

1. To support the family.
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

“The absolute, bottom-line reason that fathers go to work is to provide for their families. Provision is our job.”

What does the Bible say about a father who refuses to provide for his family? Read 1 Timothy 5:8 for the answer.

How much of your personal identification is derived from your work? If your ability to work were suddenly taken away, perhaps through a car accident, what sort of personal identity would you be left with?

Could you say no to a promotion if it meant more time spent away from your family?

When You Really Don't Know . . .

. . . if you might be a NASCAR father, who would be the best person to ask? Please don't say your boss at work! Of course, the answer should be your wife.

On a separate sheet of paper, write down the things you want to bring up in a conversation with your wife to confirm that you are, or are not, a NASCAR father.

When you have this discussion, pick a pleasant atmosphere for both of you, perhaps a restaurant you both like, and be sure to revisit the section about how you should react to possible unfavorable comments that might be headed your way.

After this conversation with your wife, you may want to restructure parts of your weekly routine to produce more time with the family. With her participation, use the three-step approach.

Taken in a positive framework, you can banish the characteristics of a NASCAR father from your life, and soon!

6

TAMING YOUR BARBARIANS

“Anarchy in a nation begins as anarchy in the home.”

Do you believe that soaring juvenile crime rates are a fathering issue? Explain your opinion.

Our criminals seem to be getting younger and younger. Why? Is it possible for a bad father to establish a family chain of violent criminals?

“When it comes to rearing children, every society is only twenty years away from barbarism.” Do you agree with this statement or do you think it’s a little far-fetched? Why?

Why are young people referred to as barbarians in this chapter?

Does it mean your kids are barbarians even if you think they are well behaved?

Read Romans 3:10–18. Is it possible that you don’t think of your kids as potential barbarians because they are *your* kids? (Only other people’s kids grow up to be barbarians.)

“The fear of the Lord is the glue that holds a society together.”

Describe the correlation between a child’s fear of his or her earthly father and the fear of the Lord that develops later in a child’s life.

How does the biblical fear of the Lord differ from an earthly fear we might have of another person?

What is a “meaningful consequence”?

What is the desired result from the imposition of a meaningful consequence?

Is there biblical justification for rebuking our children when they go astray?

What would be the main reason for a parent being lax in disciplining or rebuking their child?

How much of a role have our media and entertainment industries played in fostering insensitive attitudes among our young?

List three things parents can do to offset the influence of amoral and anti-Christian behavior as seen in many movies and TV shows.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Do you look upon spanking a child as abuse or wise fathering? What is your rationalization for your position?

“Discipline is the inoculation of our little children’s souls.”

What psychological message should the child be receiving from you at the time discipline is administered?

It has been said that anything done in excess is harmful. Does this include discipline of a child by a parent?

Talk about how biblical disciplining is different from physical abuse.

Give several examples of discipline carried to excess.

The ten principles of disciplining children.

1. Start early.

At how early an age can you begin to discipline your children?

What is the reasoning behind your answer?

Discuss with your wife a recent test of wills between you and one or more of your kids.

How did it start?

Was a “family rule” broken?

Why was it prolonged?

Was the final outcome beneficial for parent and child, or just one of you?

2. Training, not humiliation.

What happens when we discipline out of anger over a situation?

How would you be treated if God disciplined you the way you discipline your children?

How would you react to it?

What is the biblical objective of the proper disciplining of a child? (see Heb. 12:10–11)

3. Deal swiftly with disrespect.

Describe several ways children show disrespect.

Is it always verbal?

God has commanded children to honor (respect) their father and mother. In what ways are your own children showing respect for you and your wife?

In what ways are they being disrespectful?

How much disrespect will you tolerate before you react?

You must absolutely insist on your children’s respect for you *and* your wife.

4. Discipline rebellion and defiance, not childish mistakes.

The last time your child committed a minor sin, such as spilling something at the table, what was your reaction?

Did it fit the crime? Why or why not?

5. Communicate the rule clearly, and enforce it the first time.

Take stock of how you have explained the rules of the household to your kids. Do you ever punish them for infractions of rules they say were not clear to them?

If so, what do you do about it?

What are your options?

6. Make sure your child understands why he is being disciplined.

How do you take the time to explain to the child why he is being disciplined when you are so angry?

Even though you may be upset at whatever he has done, you must understand that if he's not sure why he is being punished, a learning experience will not take place.

7. Don't be afraid to make mid-course corrections, or to admit when you're wrong.

How hard is it for you to apologize or ask forgiveness of your children for a disciplinary act that was not deserved?

Likewise, what can you do when you realize you have allowed some transgressions to "slip by" without comment or action?

8. Husbands and wives must present a united front to the children.

Do you and your wife have an understanding that you will not disagree with each other over disciplinary matters in front of the children? If not, make it a point to talk about this with her and establish a ground rule that both of you can follow.

9. Always discipline with your child's personality in mind.

All our lives we have heard that everyone is different. Have you made this allowance when disciplining your children?

Do you discipline a passive child the same way you would treat one with a more aggressive personality?

10. Make sure the punishment fits the crime.

Do you look at an infraction and ask yourself, “What is it I want my child to learn as a result of being disciplined?”

Can you maintain a calm demeanor while figuring out what to do next?

If not, what is the likely outcome to your disciplinary session?

If possible, obtain copies of Dr. James Dobson’s two books referred to to learn more about applying discipline to children. When you have finished reading them, give them to a father who needs help in this area.

7

BENT BY GOD

Brainstorm the pros and cons of treating your children the same in the interest of fairness, versus modifying your approach based on each child's individual makeup.

Here are some sample thoughts:

Do you treat all your kids the same, in the interest of “being fair”?

Does it really matter if you know anything about your children's personality traits?

In the past, what weight have you given to their individual personalities when praising or disciplining them?

Review the four basic personality types.

Each of your children will fall into one of these four basic personality categories. Of course, so will you and your wife. Briefly describe the qualities of:

The Lion:

The Otter:

The Beaver:

The Golden Retriever:

Now that you have these personality types firmly locked in your memory banks, draw four vertical columns on a separate sheet of paper. Put the name of one personality type at the top of each column. Write the names of your kids down the side of the left column, followed by your wife's name and your name (in other words, make a chart).

Example:

	Lion	Otter	Beaver	Golden Retriever
John				
Sally				
Bob				
Jane				

The purpose here is to determine what the dominant personality traits are in each member of your household. To begin, in the sample family above, you would choose a percentage of each trait that you feel is present in each person. For son John, you might assign 20 percent to Lion, 40 percent to Otter and 40 percent to Golden Retriever. You would then continue down the list with each person until a dominant personality pattern is established for them. Now complete the chart for your family.

“This is all very interesting, but what’s the point? . . . Each of your kids is different. They have different strengths and they have different weaknesses. They have been custom-designed by God. And it’s your job to help them discover how they have been wired.”

As a group, discuss how the different personality traits among members of the same family can lead to problems when they are not acknowledged or recognized.

What happens when a Lion confronts an Otter?

Could the characteristics of a Beaver be especially annoying to a Golden Retriever? In what way?

Talk about how a father who is knowledgeable about these traits could better direct family life to enhance good behavior and minimize bad behavior.

So far, we have only talked about knowing the personality traits of our family so we can better understand why our children think and behave the way they do. There is a more important reason, as well. Come up with some ideas about what that reason could be. Then read the comments by Chuck Swindoll.

“Your children need to develop that same quiet confidence in who they are and in how God has put them together. And it’s your job as a father to help them make the discovery.”

Brainstorm these thoughts:

What is meant by a “God-given bent”?

How has God “bent” your children?

Are they confused about their place in the scheme of things in your household?

Sit down with your kids, one on one, and just ask them about these things?

Do you agree or disagree with the statement, “We discovered that people could not become anything they wanted. They could only become what was in harmony with who they were designed to be. . . .”

Does this statement fly in the face of conventional thinking that there are no limits to what a person may become, if they will only apply themselves? After all, even the U.S. Army tells us to “Be all you can be”

Discuss some of the benefits a child will receive when they understand their strengths and personal bents.

It Helps to Know Your Own.

“One reason so many men have difficulty helping their children discover their strengths is that, as men, they don’t know their own strengths.”

List your own strengths.

Write down an honest assessment of your strengths.

It is important because if you don't know your own strengths, how will you know whether you are living and working in the areas of your strength?

Brain Food for Thought

There are two things in your life you should really like. One is your bed and the other is your work, because between them you're going to spend about 80 percent of your time. If either one of them isn't right, you're going to be unhappy.

How can you verify that your work is in an area of your strength?

Turn to the six strengths from Bobb Biehl and determine how what you are doing stacks up against these "job descriptions."

Can you look at your answers to these six questions and conclude that your work is fulfilling, serves a noble purpose, and is what you want to do for the rest of your life?

Or do your answers indicate that your current career should not be your life's work?

If you batted a thousand on these six points, then congratulations! You love your work and it probably shows to those around you.

How do you discover what your child's strengths are? There is only one way: You must spend time with them. "Teach your children about their God-given bents and strengths and they will be productive citizens of the kingdom of God."

8

BRAVEHEART

If a father doesn't have a brave heart, then what kind of heart does he have?

For a father without a brave heart, whose heart is being broken? Is it the father, or is it someone else? Who?

How would you categorize yourself? Are you a brave heart or a faint heart?

What logic do you offer for either answer?

List three things you do, or don't do, in your life that support your answer.

Discuss why brave-hearted Christian fathers have always been in the minority (examples: How are they different? Christian fathers protect, etc.).

Do Christian fathers make mistakes?

Why shouldn't mistakes be as devastating to a Christian father as they might be to a "moral father"?

Is It Ever Too Late?

If a father has already left his wife and children for an adulterous relationship, is it ever too late to turn away?

What is the one thing a father who has turned away from his family must do to reverse the situation?

Have the group search their memories for the name, or names, of a father who has left his family and would benefit from a visit from you to talk about it. Has this father also left the church because of embarrassment over his situation?

Discuss what might be said, and what must be said, on such a visit.

How would you open the conversation and what verbal path would you follow?

What would be the objective of the visit?

Would your group agree to draw up a list of fathers to visit, form two man teams, and actually do it?

It seems that there are more professing Christians than there are Christians. Consider the comments by John Piper included in this chapter.

List some traits of a professing Christian father versus a genuine Christian father.

Do you notice any of these traits in yourself, in your lifestyle? If so, is there any conflict in your life with the teachings of our Lord?

Are you alone in this?

Turn to Psalm 101:2–4 and read it.

Private Sin Eventually Leads to Public Sin.

Explain the difference between private sin and public sin. Give some examples of each.

Why is Satan always trying to take you from private sin to public sin?

What is the right way to get out of the trap of private sin? Read James 5:16 for the answer.

The First Thing You Must Do Is . . .

. . . confess your sin to another! Oh, wow! That has got to be one of the most difficult things an errant father would ever have to do in his lifetime.

Are the tremendous emotional difficulty and embarrassment in confessing a private sin to a Christian brother the very things that prevents us from doing it?

What are the consequences of going against the advice of James?

What sort of Christian brother would you seek out if you wanted to confess a private sin?

Do you feel that you are a strong enough and mature enough Christian to be the confessor to someone who needs to talk to you?

Talk about what any father can do to change from a faint heart to a braveheart.

9

MEMORIAL STONES

Reread Joshua 3:11–13, 17.

There were two primary reasons why God rolled back the Jordan river.

1. The Israeli people had to get across the river.
2. What was the second reason?

Why was it important for God to validate the appointment of Moses' successor?

Did your parents or grandparents ever share a story with you of how the Lord was at work in a particular situation in their lives?

Give a few examples of what events might make a memorial stone, worthy of being told to future generations.

Would these stories, passed down to you, be the memorial stones in your life?

Have you ever passed on these stories to your kids? If not, why not?

What quality must a memorial stone story possess?

Does this mean that not every family story or legend, even if passed down for several generations, will qualify as a memorial stone? State the reasoning behind your answer.

Your Children Need to Know These Things

“In days gone by, God has done some remarkable things for you. . .

Those acts of God are your memorial stones. And your children need to know about them.”

Make a list of events in your life that God has guided. (examples: How you met your wife, being safely delivered from an accident, how you met the Lord, etc.).

Steve Farrar recounts the difficulties of the early days of his ministry to men.

What was the first problem he faced, and shared with his wife?
The second problem is common to us all. What was it?

Was God aware of the problems? How are you sure?

Did God solve the problems?

Is working through others part of God’s plan?

There is no better way to teach your kids the truth about God than by showing them your own personal memorial stones.

For Downsized Daddies

“I have told you these stories for a reason. And the reason I have taken you through some of my experiences is that I want you to know that I have learned first-hand about the faithfulness of God.”

Discuss what emotions a father who has lost his job would experience. (example: Inadequacy, embarrassment, and so on.).

Does God know your needs?

Does He know the trauma you are going through?

How does He know them?

Members of the group should talk about how God knows our every need.

Do you have the patience to let God take care of your needs in His time and in His way?

Have you really let go, allowing God to step into your life?

10

DRY COPIES

What is a dry copy of a father?

Does it strike any fear in your heart at all to know your children may grow up to be copies of you?

What was your first thought when you read the last sentence?

“A copy is an imitation of an original.”

In 1 Corinthians 4:15–17, is it vanity that caused Paul to tell others to be imitators of himself?

If not vanity, why would he say it?

Are you prepared to invite your children to copy you, your lifestyle, beliefs and behavior?

What in your life wouldn't you want your children to emulate and how would you change it to become a better example of a Christian father?

Do you believe these two statements? Talk about what they mean.

1. Like father, like son.
2. The acorn doesn't fall far from the tree.

Children naturally imitate the actions of their fathers. They are going to copy their fathers whether their fathers are good or bad.

What are the three traits that children will copy from their fathers?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

You May Be the Original, but Should You Break the Mold?

There are only two atmospheres that can be present in a home, *constructive* or _____ .

Think of three commonly spoken phrases you would hear in a home with a predominantly constructive atmosphere:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Likewise, think of three commonly spoken phrases you would hear in a home with a predominantly destructive atmosphere:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Is it possible for father to set an atmosphere for his kids that works even when he isn't there?

If you could only do one thing to foster a constructive atmosphere for your children, what would it be?

Your Kids Will Copy Your Attitude Toward Their Mom.

It says in 1 Peter 3:7 that women are the weaker vessels. Explain why this verse is *not* a put-down of women.

What is your overall attitude in your home that shows your children that you have respect for your wife?

Can you name five things you do or say as evidence you are teaching respect for Mom to your kids?

Can you go beyond respect? How about love and honor that the kids can see?

“Children are genuinely delighted to see their dad honor their mom. They sense that all is well on the home front.”

Can Your Kids Just Talk to You?

“Children must have the conviction that their fathers are approachable, and that they can talk to them about anything.”

Can you recall the last time your child asked for your opinion or advice about a situation in their life?

How long ago was it?

Afterward, did you follow up with him or her to see how things worked out?

If your child is having a crisis, how likely is he to turn to you or your wife for help and guidance?

In the space at the left, rank the following items with the numbers 1 through 6 based on who you think your child would consult first, then second, and so on, for help with a problem:

_____ Their peers	_____ Teacher or counselor	_____ You
_____ Your wife	_____ Youth pastor	_____ MTV

After seriously thinking about these choices, are you surprised at the results?

If you didn't like the outcome, what can you do to redirect your child's thinking?

The Elements of Approachability

The first requisite to being approachable is that you *listen* to your kids when they speak to you.

Do you find it inconvenient to stop whatever you're doing and just listen to your kids when they talk to you? Why?

What message is a father who listens sending to his kids?

Brainstorm all the attributes of a good listener that you can think of and list the really good ones that you could put into practice with your own family.

The second requisite to being approachable is that you must be understanding.

If a child feels his parents continually misunderstand him, what is he likely to do when he needs to talk about something important in his life?

In addition to being understanding of your child's spoken word, what else should you, look for that tells you to slow down, listen, and understand?

Have you ever considered tears as a form of communication? What do tears tell you, and how do you react when you see them, especially in your son?

When it comes to grown men, are you Mr. Macho? Is it all right for a man to cry?

Under what conditions or circumstances, if any?

If you find yourself to be weak in understanding nonverbal communication, consider this passage: "And don't be afraid to shed a few tears yourself now and then. If Jesus could do it, so can you."

11

THREE-PEAT

The biblical histories of the Israeli kings in the books of Kings and Chronicles in the Old Testament show us how hard it is for godly fathers to produce godly sons.

Is it any different today?

In all this time, what has changed?

Is it easier or harder to produce godly sons in today's world?
Why?

If God has promised to bless not only the godly man, but also his children and his children's children, then why do we find it so difficult to follow His teachings?

Don't we want God's blessings?

Consider the comparisons between First, Second, and Third generation fathers in this chapter.

If you are the First Generation father, how do your sons and grandsons fit the descriptions in the other two columns?

If you placed the names of your sons and grandsons at the top of the second and third columns, would you change the descriptions under their names?

If so, how would you change them?

What could you honestly say about the faith of your sons and grandsons?

What is likely to happen in a family chain where the father does not follow Deuteronomy 6?

Revisit the letter to James Dobson from his father. What do you think Dobson's father is saying about the main obstacle a modern-day father faces in establishing his family chain?

What can you do about it?

Is it time for *you* to rethink your priorities?

"If you want to see your family chain over the next several generations come to Christ, it's going to take more than saying grace before you eat dinner."

What is the author talking about here?

Brainstorm several possible answers.

Can we assume that because we do our best to live a godly life, our children will do the same because they have seen our example?

Explain the weaknesses in that argument, if you see any.
What does Scripture say about the rationalization for continual prayer for the salvation of our children?

Have you ever prayed for the salvation of your grandchildren, even your great-grandchildren who may be yet unborn? If you are not praying for these future links in your family chain, then who is?

Revisit John Piper's explanation about why we don't take time to pray.

What is coming between you and your prayer time with our Lord?

Whatever it is, you must reorder your priorities to make time to talk with God.

Define what *fasting* means to you.

Do prayer and fasting go together?

Why is it that we do one so often and the other so seldom?

What should our attitude and our manner be when we fast?
(see Matt. 6:16-18).

What message are we giving to God when we fast along with our prayers?

When you pray and fast for your children, what are you acknowledging to God?

What does fasting enable you to do with your thoughts? How does that happen?

List 5 times, or places, in your daily routine where you could take time to pray (example: while commuting in your car).

Likewise, list some times in your daily or weekly routine you could fast, even for short periods.

“Every time someone in the Scriptures fasted they did so with a specific purpose.”

Having a specific purpose in mind when you fast focuses your thinking and your commune with God. Discuss the prayer and fasting examples and add examples of your own.

Are you willing to go that extra mile for your children? Will you make a personal commitment to both pray *and* fast for your children? That is the extra mile.