

Premeditated Parenting

Discussion Guide

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9/13/2006 Revision

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Introduction

This discussion guide is intended for small group leaders, parenting class leaders, and individuals to use along with the Premeditated Parenting book to “dig deeper” into the parenting concepts presented. You can use this on your own to help you think through your own parenting and consider how these ideas can be applied. However, these questions will be the most helpful to you if you can join with a group of other parents in the same stage of life and discuss them together.

The Discussion Guide consists of six sets of questions, one for each chapter in the book. In addition, Appendix A contains additional questions. This gives you the option of printing out the appropriate page for everyone in your group, or creating your own set that is better suited to your group using questions from the Appendix.

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Chapter 1 – Rethinking Parenting

- 1) What do you think it means to “win” with your kids?

- 2) As you look at the teens in your church, do you think that parents have “won” with the majority of these kids? How does it make you feel about the state of Christian families?

- 3) “Parenting is God’s crucially important mission that He has delegated to you because he wants to bless you and accomplish His purposes through your family. If you can view it as such you will be able to embrace parenting along with whatever challenges come with it.” (p. 13)

Do you view parenting as a “crucially important” mission that God has given to you? Does this encourage you or scare you?

- 4) When you think about the importance of the mission God has given parents, and you look at the teenagers and young adults around you, do you feel like most parents need a tune-up or a complete overhaul?

- 5) Which of the five precarious parenting patterns do you personally struggle with the most?

- 6) What does “premeditated parenting” mean? What kind of effort does it require?

- 7) List all of the qualities you would like to see in your child at age 16. You may want to start this list now, then take this home and think through it some more.

Chapter 2 – Parenting With Confidence

- 1) Who do you turn to for the majority of your parenting advice? Dr. Spock, Dr. Laura, Dr. Dobson, Gary Smalley, Tedd Tripp, magazines, parents, friends, peers, God, pastors, church leaders, books, TV (Super Nanny), radio, someone else?

- 2) How do you know which advice is worth listening to?

- 3) What keeps us from praying about our kids (or anything else, for that matter)?

- 4) The Bible does contain some direct parenting advice, but maybe not as much as we'd like. How can it help your parenting to have a strong knowledge of all of God's Word?

- 5) **Proverbs 22:6 (NIV)** *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

Do you think this verse is a guarantee that your kids will turn out? Why, or why not?

- 6) "Everyone else may think that your job as a parent is just to educate, provide for, and protect your kids until they are on their own. Everyone else may think that you just have to cross your fingers and hope they turn out okay, but you are not everyone else. You must lock into the responsibility that God has given you. He clearly states that you can change the outcome of your kids' lives. *Do you believe this?*" (p 50)

Do *you* believe this? Why or why not?

- 7) How and why do we continue to keep pressing forward with our parenting when we know that there is a chance our kids might still rebel or otherwise not "turn out"?

Chapter 3 – Winning Ways

- 1) What are your answers to these questions from page 67: What does your child need from you that you are not giving him or her? What areas in your parenting do you sense that God wants you to change but you are reluctant to do so?
- 2) **James 1:22 (NIV)** *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*

What steps can you take to go from *knowing* the things you need to do (from the previous question) to *doing* them?

- 3) What's wrong with the thinking of the dad who said he did a good job with his kids because he "went to all their games" (p. 83)?
- 4) Share an example of something your kids have imitated after seeing you do it.
- 5) Think back to the list of characteristics that you would like to see in your kids when they reach the age of 16 (from the discussion of Chapter 1). How many of those things will they learn by *imitating* you?
- 6) **Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)** *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

How does this passage relate to parenting?

- 7) **Mark 3:25 (NIV)** *If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.*

Why is unity among parents important to children?

Chapter 4 – Parenting in Love

1) If you had to choose between one or the other, would you say you are too soft on your kids or are you too hard on your kids?

2) “Rules without relationship results in rebellion.”

Why is this? How do you maintain the proper balance?

3) Do you think your own parents were expressive enough in how they showed love to you? If not, why would you say that? If so, can you think of examples of how they showed love?

4) How do you think the example you saw modeled by your parents will affect your own parenting when it comes to the expression of love?

5) *Matthew 3:17 (NIV) And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”*

Matthew 17:5 (NIV) While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

What is the difference between loving someone and being pleased with him or her? Why are *both* important?

6) “One common deception is to think you are critically important at work, but at home you’re somewhat expendable. Your spouse, or even someone else, can pick up the slack at home, but no one can pick up the slack at work. Or can they? The very fact that you can be fired implies that someone else can do your job, or that your job can even go undone. The fact that you can’t be fired at home highlights your need to be there. No one else will do your job.” – p. 112

What are your thoughts about this statement?

7) How will your attitude about parenting and your kids affect your response when you are dealing with the unpleasant aspects of the job (like cleaning up vomit at 2 a.m.)?

Chapter 5 – Discipline

- 1) A bonsai gardener continually prunes his trees so that they can be shaped as they should be. What, then, does “bonsai parenting” look like?
- 2) Read about Eli and his sons in 1 Samuel chapters 1 and 3. It seems like Eli’s sons were pretty old. Why didn’t God just deal with them directly instead of holding Eli responsible? What does this imply about God’s view of parents’ responsibility to discipline their children?

- 3) **Proverbs 13:24 (NIV)** *He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.*

Proverbs 22:15 (NIV) *Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.*

Proverbs 23:13-14 (NIV) *Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. ¹⁴Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.*

Proverbs 29:15 (NIV) *The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.*

How can the Bible promote the use of the rod when so many experts today say that it is a harmful thing for your children?

- 4) What would you say to someone who gave any of the following reasons not to spank:
 - Spanking is abusive
 - Hitting leads to hitting
 - Kids who are spanked may be compliant, but their hearts aren’t changed
 - Kids who are spanked struggle with decision making later in life
 - We’re supposed to love our kids, not hit them
- 5) When do you think spanking should be used, and when should parents use other forms of discipline?
- 6) Why must effective discipline be *immediate, memorable, and consistent*?
- 7) **2 Corinthians 2:6-8 (NIV)** *The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him.*

When you apply this verse to the discipline of children, why is it crucial that all the steps (sufficient discipline, forgiveness, comfort, and reaffirmation of love) be a part of the process?

Chapter 6 - Teaching and Training

- 1) As you look around at the people you know, what would you say have been some of people's greatest struggles in life?
- 2) What can you do to equip your child to handle those trials?
- 3) What do you think about the analogy of training being like a gun barrel (pp. 191-192), do you think that the typical parents today has a barrel that is too short, too wide, too narrow, or just right?
- 4) What are the benefits of children obeying quickly, completely, and cheerfully?
- 5) If your family truly lived their lives a Jesus taught, do you think your kids would grow up feeling like they had religion crammed down their throats? If not, what creates that feeling?
- 6) **Matthew 22:36-40 (NIV)** *“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”* ³⁷*Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’* ³⁸*This is the first and greatest commandment.* ³⁹*And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’* ⁴⁰*All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*

What would our lives and our kids' lives look like if we learned to obey just these verses?

- 7) In regards to all that was presented in this book and in our discussions, what has impacted you and your family the most so far?

Appendix A – Additional Questions

Chapter 1 – Rethinking Parenting

Describe a parent that has “lost”.

Describe a parent that has “won”.

Do you think it is true that we “need to agree with God on everything”? (Page xv) Why, or why not?

Which has impacted your parenting more: reading books, or studying the Bible? (Page xv)

Do you agree that “there is nothing more important than knowing where you and your family will spend eternity?” How can you have any level of confidence in this? (Page 4)

What are some of the fears that parents face?

If you want to see your child grow up to be a man or woman “after God’s own heart” as David was described, what would that look like?

Do you think most parents put much thought into their parenting? Why or why not?

Read Deuteronomy 7:14 and Psalms 127:3-5.

Do you see your kids as God’s blessing?

How does your view of this impact your parenting?

Which of these aspects of your life will leave the greatest *lasting* legacy? What priority should they then have relative to one another?

- Work
- Friendships
- Hobbies
- Ministry
- Kids

What is the difference between the type of parenting that is now considered the norm and the type of parenting that includes strategically thinking about what you want your kids to be? (p 13)

What does it mean to “respond heroically now” rather than waiting for a crisis (like teenage rebellion)? (p 18)

Consider the following “precarious parenting patterns” and for each one, discuss how over-emphasis in the given area can create problems:

- 1) A fun childhood
- 2) Self-discovery
- 3) Education
- 4) Independence
- 5) Social acceptance

Chapter 2 – Parenting With Confidence

If you had access to the world’s leading Christian parenting experts and could call them at any time to get advice, would you? If so, what keeps you from “calling on” God in prayer?

Why do you think it seems like bad kids happen to good parents?

Do you really believe that your parenting will have an impact on your kids? Why or why not?

Read 1 Timothy 3:12 and Titus 1:6

What requirements are on church leaders in regard to their families?

Do you think a parent has control over each of these areas? Why or why not?

How would you parent differently now if you knew that your child was going to rebel in the teen years? Why?

What was the most encouraging verse to you in this chapter? Why?

Free will is all about choices. How will your parenting now affect *how* your children make choices down the road, both now and later, when they are out from under your authority?

What biblical reasons are there for you to believe that God is with you and is supporting you in your parenting?

Chapter 3 – Winning Ways

What are the advantages of shaping a child’s character at an early age?

If you have older kids, can you still make a difference? What are the unique challenges for you as a parent if you are in that position?

There is a big difference between *listening* to good parenting principles and *doing* them. What gets in the way of *doing* these things in your life?

How can you “pass the baton” on to your kids so that they don’t have to cover ground you have already covered?

Ephesians 6:4, 1 Timothy 3:4,5, Hebrews 12:9,10

In two parent families, why is it critical for dads to be involved?

When it comes to spirituality, do you think most teens desire what their parents have? How does our parenting affect that?

“There really is no such thing as free-time. It is all God-time. There is time in which God allows us to rest, relax, enjoy life, and read a book, but it is not free. It is His. We need to surrender our ‘rights’ to do what we want.” – p. 76

What are the implications of this when it comes to parenting? What sacrifices are you going to have to make? What will motivate you to make those sacrifices?

When parenting your kids, why is it always important to keep the “end product” in mind?

Chapter 4 – Parenting in Love

For you dads, have you experienced the ‘disconnect’ from your kids that is described in section titled “The Hearts of the Fathers”? What can you do to reconnect?

What are some ways that you affirm your love to your children?

Why is it so hard (especially for men) to say “I love you” to our kids? Is it because we don’t love them? If not, then why?

Why is it important for your kids to know that you love them because they are *yours*?

How can you communicate your pleasure for your children even when they are acting up all the time?

Read the story of the prodigal son. (Luke 15:11-32) Explain why the prodigal’s brother was upset. Why didn’t the father respond like the older brother? How do you think the father’s love changed through the story? Do you think his pleasure for his son changed?

Do you think most parents struggle with loving their children, or just expressing that love?

What could you change in your home to better express your love and pleasure, and to give your kids a sense of belonging?

What are some practical ways that your family can spend ‘God-time’ together?

Why can’t you simply schedule ‘quality’ time?

Chapter 5 – Discipline

Why can’t a child be left to be shaped by his own ‘inclinations’ into what he or she would ‘naturally’ become?

Why do we hesitate to ‘interfere’ with our children?

It seems like most parents have a sincere love for their children. So why does Proverbs 13:24 say, “If you do not punish your children, you don’t love them, but if you love your children, you will correct them”? (NCV) What do you think it means?

How can you be firm with your kids and still communicate your love to them? Are these conflicting goals?

In the area of discipline, what would need to change in your parenting for you to feel that you were disciplining as God would want?

“Look into my eyes”, “touch my leg”, and similar ‘tests’ may seem odd at first. What is the point of these methods?

What are some things to look at if you feel your discipline is not effective?

Chapter 6 - Teaching and Training

Proverbs 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

What does it mean to “train a child”?

In what areas do you think it would be important to train a child?

Do you view your home as an ‘incubator’? What does that look like in your home?

What simple truths can you establish in your children’s thinking that will stick with them for the rest of their lives?

What could you do in your own life that would cause you to read the Bible regularly, what about your kids?

How can you introduce 'trials' into your kids' lives that will produce character? It could be easy to go overboard on this and make a child's life miserable, but do you think that most parents are too hard or too easy on their kids in this area?

Read Deuteronomy 6:6-9. Why do you think people are so worried about cramming religion down their kids' throats? Is that something we should be concerned about? How can we give our kids a lot of instruction and direction without them feeling resentful for their upbringing?

How much influence do other kids have on your kids? How important for you as a parent to control that?

Your children will either be missionaries or mission fields. What does this statement mean? Do you agree with it?

What is one thing you are going to implement to help in the training of your children?

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