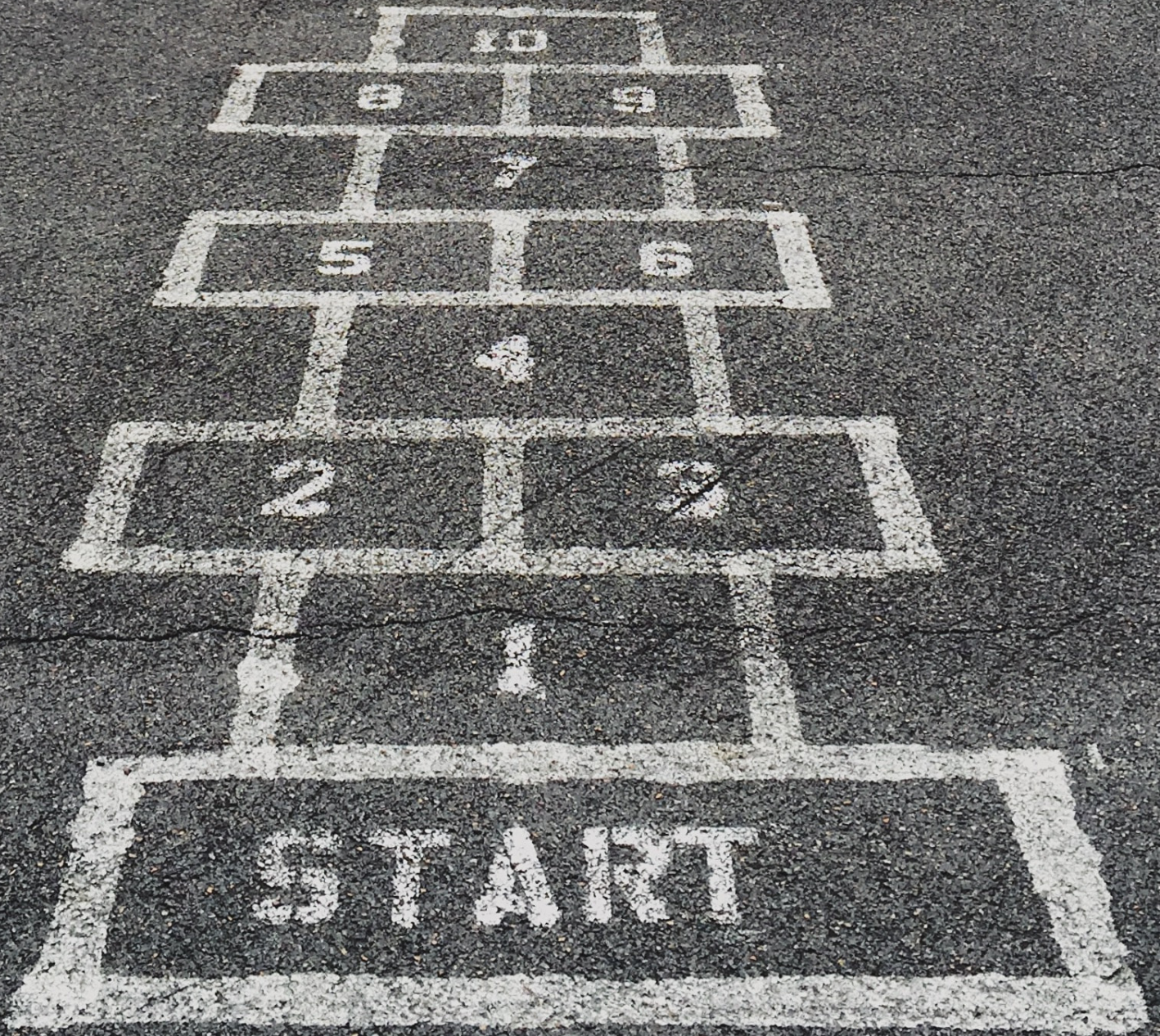


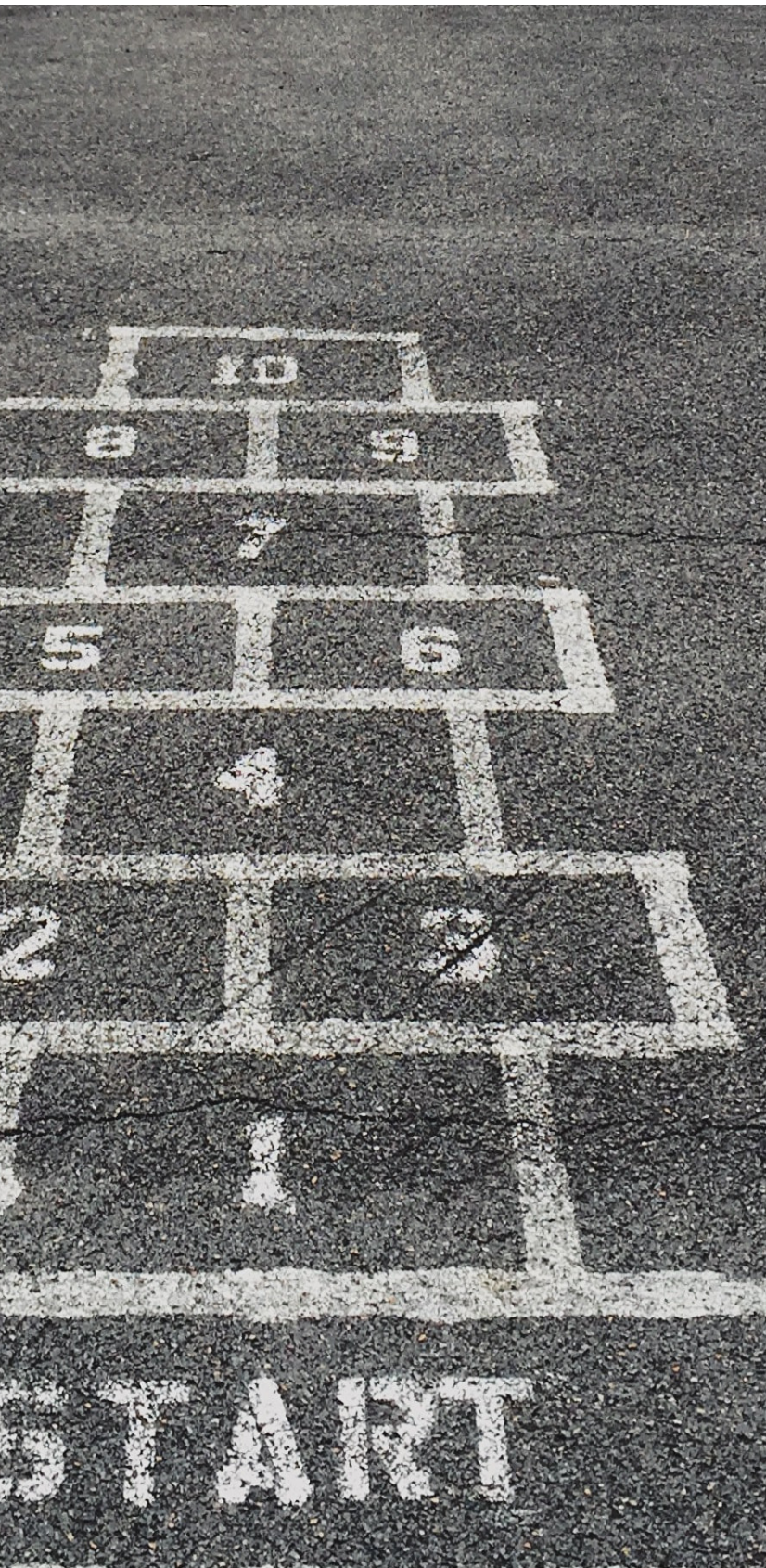
PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR A NEW SCHOOL YEAR

JOURNEY



KEVIN CARSON, DMIN

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PURPOSE OF LIFE

As children head back to school, one of the key issues they should remember is purpose of life. What response would you receive if you were to ask your child, "What is your purpose in life?" Just this question is actually scary as a parent. I hope my children would give the right answer, but it is impossible to say. Therefore, this is a good time to review with our children this key principle for living.

What is the right answer?

Our children should be able to tell us that their purpose in life is to bring glory to God. There are many ways to say this such as: to bring glory to God, to be God's kind of person, to honor Jesus, to become more like Jesus, to act like Jesus every day. Of course the exact wording is not as important as the concept.



Key Bible Passages to Help

- "Whether therefore you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- "Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him" (2 Corinthians 5:9).
- "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).
- "Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him" (Isaiah 43:7).
- "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Jesus also was young and grew in wisdom.

The Bible teaches in Luke, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52).

This is a helpful verse and concept for our children to hear and understand. Jesus was also their age. Jesus faced the same pressures that our children face - yes, a different time period and in a different context - but ultimately, the same types of pressures (cf., Heb 4:15). It was in each of these pressures that Jesus demonstrated His love for God by bringing honor and glory to God (cf., John 17:4).

In similar ways, we want our children to understand two things: 1) A desire to honor and glorify God should motivate everything our children do; 2) This is demonstrated through obedience to God.

Teaching Opportunities for Parents

- Have your child memorize (or better yet, have the entire family memorize) one or two of the key verses above. Be sure you explain them clearly for your child to understand what they mean. I particularly like 1 Corinthians 10:13 and 2 Corinthians 5:9. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 you can review what "whatsoever" means and give many clarifying examples. In 2 Corinthians 5:9 you can talk through what aim or goal means as well as living a life that is well-pleasing in the power of Christ.
- Take time to pray with your children to ask God to grant them the wisdom to live for what God wants from them.
- You can use any tool out of a kitchen drawer or some similar item to illustrate this principle. Ask the child, "For what purpose the designer of the tool make this tool?" Have them consider the uses and purposes of the designer. You can ask other questions like, "Could you use this for other purposes?" "If the designer of this product watched us use it in this way, do you think he or she would be pleased or satisfied?"

"Jesus' goal in everyday living was to do whatever God wanted Him to do."

- Make a list of specific scenarios and review some of those in conversation with your child. Here's an example: "If your teacher asked you to sit quietly in class, what are some of the reasons you should obey him or her?" Then listen to the reasons. There may be several good reasons, but you want to especially emphasize that God expects you to obey authority so obeying your teacher brings honor or glory to God. You can quickly brainstorm many of these types of examples.
- Emphasize that no matter how they have done in previous years, this is a new opportunity to honor God in this new school year.

*"What is your purpose
in life?"*

WORLDVIEW

Your Child's Worldview

Every day as we engage the world, we do so through our worldview. The most basic definition of worldview is the lens through which we view our world. It is the system of thinking and beliefs through which we interpret the world around us. Our worldview impacts everything we see, engage, and consider.

As your child begins a new school year, as a parent you need to help your child grasp the idea of worldview. Worldview impacts your child from multiple key areas: his or her own, that of friends, the teacher's, and the curriculum's. Therefore, this is a key area of concern to remind our children as school begins.



An Illustration for Worldview

A great way to think of worldview is to think of a lens. If you wear glasses or contacts, then you understand the importance of the lens. For instance, some people can't see anything clear without glasses. As soon as they get up in the morning, they must put on glasses in order to see good enough to function. It takes the world from a fuzzy mess to a functional, clear picture.

Others of course need glasses to varying degrees. If a person does not need glasses and puts them on, then everything seems blurry and can quickly cause dizziness.

Why? Because the lens of the glasses changes the perspective of what is seen. Good glasses make life easier. I once had a bad lens prescription (long story for a different day). My glasses did not help things get much better. They helped a little; however, things were still fuzzy. I received a new pair and everything cleared up. What once was fuzzy – because of the lens through which I looked – is now clear.

Worldview is similar. Your worldview (and your child's) is the belief system or lens through which they see the world. We each are influenced by our worldview whether we realize it or not. It operates in the background as we interact with the world.

A Summer Evening on the Lake

Worldview mattered one evening on the lake many years ago. I was a new dad. This was the first time my wife and baby were riding with me on Kentucky Lake. It had gotten dark and we were ready to head back to our campsite. We had been fishing in a protected cove away from the wind. None of us realized how hard the wind had been blowing. As we pulled out of the cove, the waves were large and dangerous – especially for night driving.

Kevin's worldview: I understood the dangerous situation. Having grown up on lakes, I understood how dangerous this situation was. We had one mile to drive back to the campsite in swells several feet tall. All I had to see was the light from the moon. My grandad, wife, and young son all depended upon my ability to navigate the waves over that stretch of water. This was not going to be easy. In other words, my experience and knowledge impacted how I viewed the situation.

Kelly's worldview: Kelly's experience was much different. She had not spent her life on a lake and did not understand the dangerous situation. From her inexperience, she assumed that lakes were like this all the time. She sat beside me holding our nine-month-old son completely calm. She understood the lake was rough but had no sense of it being dangerous. As we made it back to the

"We each are influenced by our worldview whether we realize it or not. It operates in the background as we interact with the world."

campsite, she was completely calm. Her experience (hardly none on the water) and her knowledge (my husband has done this all his life) impacted how she viewed the situation as well.

Thankfully we made it back safely. Our experiences of that boat ride demonstrate the impact of worldview. She was calm and thought the ride was crazy, full of waves and water splashing; I was tense and thought the ride was crazy, full of danger and potential harm. Our worldview impacted our interpretation of the events.

Key Bible Passages to Help

- “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.
- For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:8-10).
- “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2).
- “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—” (Ephesians 4:14-15).

Worldview impacts your child's education.

For the Christian, how your child views the world around him or her matters. The teacher, curriculum, and other children around your child all have a perspective or lens through which they view the world. That perspective matters as does your own child's.

What are questions that help reveal the impact of what your child hears, considers, and learns?

1. Where did we come from? Why are we here? (origin and purpose of life)
2. What is wrong with the world? What is sin? How does sin impact one's thinking?
3. How can we fix it? Is Jesus necessary to help? What role does the Bible play?
4. What is truth? What is absolute truth?
5. What happens when one dies? Where are we going?
6. What should we do in life? What should be our values?
7. What are our goals? Why would we seek to attain those goals?

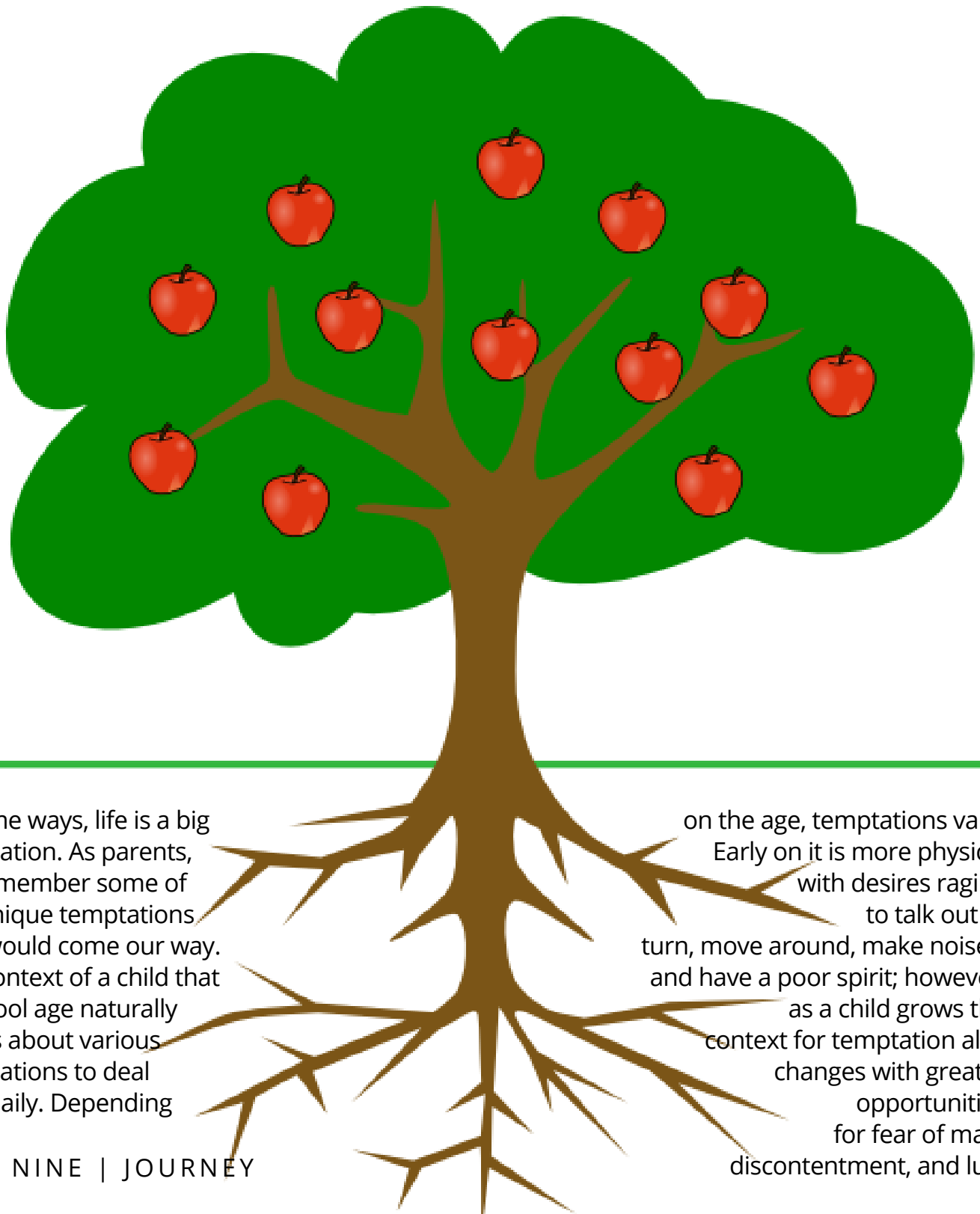
"Worldview is the lens through which we view our world."

Teaching Opportunities for Parents

- Have your child memorize (or better yet, have the entire family memorize) one or two of the key verses above. Be sure you explain them clearly for your child to understand what they mean. All three verses imply that for a Christian, it is necessary to understand that the world's philosophy is inherently bad for the Christian. They exhort and warn us of the influence of worldview.
- Take time to pray with your children to ask God to grant them the wisdom to discern the worldviews in which they interact.
- Encourage your child to write down questions he or she has during the day to discuss at night. If a teacher or another student says something that does not seem right, have them make a note of it to discuss later. If there are things in the curriculum that does not seem right, have the child bring that home and discuss it.
- Illustrate the idea of worldview for your child. Illustration one: if someone there has glasses, smear something on one lens and leave the other lens clear. Talk about what it would be like to try to use the glasses. One eye will interpret the world one way; the other eye will interpret the world in a different way.
- Illustration two: You can also use cups of water in clear glasses. Use drops of food coloring to change the color of each glass (minimum 3 or 4). Hold a piece of paper of some kind or another behind the glass and let the child see how the color of the water impacts what you can see through the glass. If it is a magazine page or something similar, demonstrate how the color of the water actually impacts the colors and details you can see on the page. The color represents the worldview and impacts what can be seen and experienced.
- Make a list of specific scenarios and review some of those in conversation with your child. Here's an example: "If your friend says it is not important to obey your parents, how do you interpret that statement?" or "The textbook says that we evolved over millions of years. What do you think when you read that? Why?"

"The system of thinking and beliefs through which we interpret the world around us and impacts everything we see, engage, and consider."

HOW TO DEAL WITH TEMPTATION



In some ways, life is a big temptation. As parents, we remember some of the unique temptations that would come our way. The context of a child that is school age naturally brings about various temptations to deal with daily. Depending

on the age, temptations vary. Early on it is more physical with desires raging to talk out of turn, move around, make noises, and have a poor spirit; however, as a child grows the context for temptation also changes with greater opportunities for fear of man, discontentment, and lust.

Pressure, Trials, Temptations, and Desires

The four terms each parent needs to understand are pressure, trials, temptations, and desires. Using James 1:1-18 as our guide, let me explain all four terms to you.

Pressure is the context of the student. Pressures are both positive and negative. Common pressures when doing school include having to listen, the discipline of learning, expectations (from parents, teachers, and parent-teachers), deadlines, and structure. Plus adults and other peers are part of the pressure of the child. Basically the child's pressure includes all the various details of life. I often call these pressure-filled circumstances.

Trials are opportunities to bring God glory in the midst of pressure. Whenever a child responds to pressure in a way that helps the child grow in character to become more like Christ or honor God in some way, that is known as a trial. The pressure-filled circumstances provides the child an opportunity to grow.

Temptations are solicitations to sin in the midst of pressure. Here the child does not respond in faithfulness to the pressure-filled circumstance; instead, the child is tempted to sin. Rather than growing as a faithful follower of Christ, the child wants to sin instead.

Desires are the "wants" or "lusts" of the heart. This is the key indicator as to what is going to happen. James teaches that the desire is the bait or lure that draws the heart away toward sin. As a parent, you do not want to miss this. The child's heart wants something in the midst of this pressure-filled circumstance. Whatever the heart wants is what will drive the response to the pressure. This is what determines if it is a trial or temptation.

"Early on it is more physical with desires raging to talk out of turn, move around, make noises, and have a poor spirit; however, as a child grows the context for temptation also changes with greater opportunities for fear of man,..."

A Simple Illustration

The teacher is talking and every student should sit quietly and listen. Lunch time is in 15 minutes.

The pressure: teacher talking and lunch time is near.

Trial: If the child desires to honor God (that is what rules his heart) in this moment, he will continue to sit and obey, recognizing it is only 15 more minutes. The pressure helps the child grow through the midst of it. The child grows and demonstrates faithfulness to Christ.

Temptation: If the child desires his own way and wants to eat immediately, he may act out, talk without permission, begin to be very fidgety, and disrupt the teacher. Notice, the pressure does not change. But the heart ruled by a desire to please self in this moment (the want or desire) produces a temptation to sin.

So the same pressure-filled circumstance or situation can be either a trial (when what rules the heart is a desire to honor and obey Christ where the student grows in faithfulness) or a temptation (when what rules the heart is anything different than primarily wanting to honor and obey Christ). If the temptation continues, ultimately it brings sin.

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Key Bible Passages to Help

- “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (James 1:13-15).
- “For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (Luke 6:43-45).

Understanding Temptation

When you understand both these verses, it points to the source of temptation as the heart. Essentially, the object of temptation is not the primary key; instead, it is the desire in the heart. Whatever it is in the midst of the pressure that the child wants produces functional control of the heart.

Temptation and behavior are often age associated.

Pressure/Temptations/Trials with their corresponding behavior often tend to follow an age-maturity pattern.

For children below the 6th grade here are some of the common problem areas:

- 1) disrupting, such as unruliness and rowdiness;
- 2) acting out of order, such as being out of the seat at the wrong time,

pushing in line, or some sort of other behavior that is known by the student to be unacceptable; 3) not participating, such as not doing appropriate seat work, homework, or participating in a discussion; 4) ungodly attitude, such as verbalizing or showing an attitude that leads to poor performance or disrespect; 5) lacking courtesy, such as calling names and unmannerly conduct; 6) talking at a time that is known to be unacceptable, such as when a teacher is teaching a lesson; and 7) intentional disobedience, such as purposely and knowingly not obeying someone in authority with a spirit of rebellion.

As a child grows into middle school and beyond, the context or look of temptation/trial/pressure often changes. At this age, students should be prepared for class, obey classroom rules, be respectful of others and property, be in his or her seat when the bell rings, maintain personal time management, and refrain from negative comments. Rebellious actions like intentional disobedience, cheating, cursing, and fighting with others should not be tolerated. In addition, include various ungodly and unwise responses to lust, such as inappropriate touching, sexting, and intercourse. Various temptations can be associated with any of these behaviors.

Teaching Opportunities for Parents

- Have your child memorize (or better yet, have the entire family memorize) one or two of the key verses above. Be sure you explain them clearly for your child to understand what they mean.
- Take time to pray with your children to ask God to grant them the wisdom to discern their hearts as they engage various pressures.

- Work through various pressure-filled circumstances with your child so that he or she begins to learn how to interpret what in the heart produced a particular behavior. The fruit (behavior) always follows the root (what is desired in the heart).
- Illustrate this principle with a simple picture of a sun (the heat or pressure-filled circumstance), a tree (the fruit either good or bad), and the tree's roots (this could be drawn as a heart underneath the tree where the roots go and represents the desires that rule the heart). The key for the child's understanding is this: the pressure does not produce the behavior (fruit) – it is only the context. What produces the fruit is what rules the heart or the root.
- Practice this with your child to help him or her think through what it is that he or she desires in the midst of a particular pressure.
- Ask the child the following questions to help him or her discern the root issues.
 - What did I desire so much that I was willing to sin to get it?
 - What did I desire so much that I was willing to sin if I did not get it?
 - What did I desire so much that I was willing to sin if I was afraid I was going to lose it?
 - What did I desire so much that I turned to that as my refuge rather than Jesus Christ?

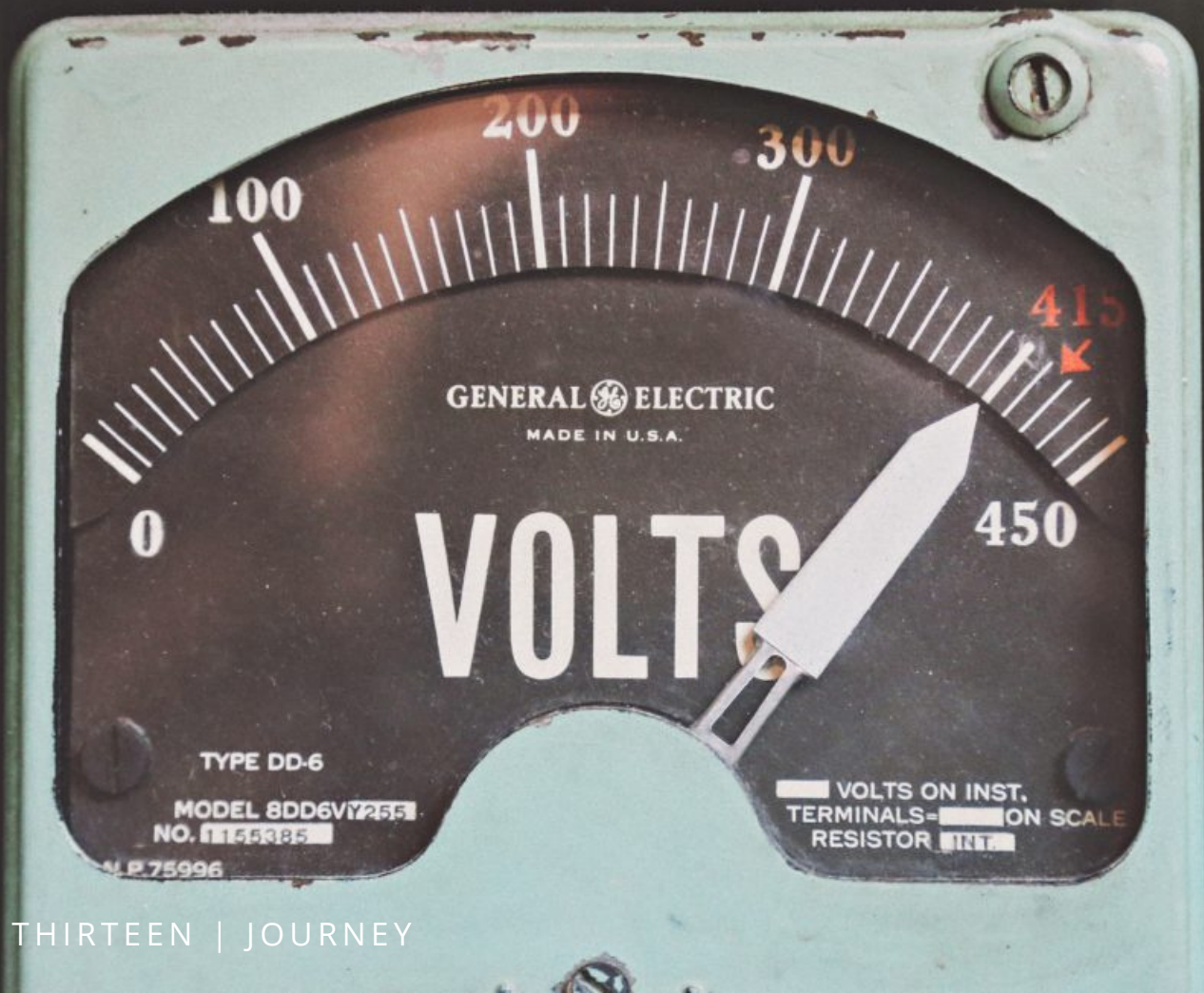
*...either toward
greater faithfulness
or toward sin.*

CHRIST MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

So far I have highlighted the necessity of living for the glory of God and the inevitability of temptation. In this chapter I share the good news – the righteousness, presence, and power of Christ that makes living for God's glory possible. The righteousness, presence, and power of Christ makes saying "no" to temptation possible. Jesus Christ makes the difference for your child.

Implications of Being in Christ for Your Student

These are three major implications that your children absolutely can not afford to miss!



First, the righteousness of Christ makes living for Jesus possible.

When your child asks Jesus for forgiveness of sins and to save him or her, spiritually Christ gives your child a new heart. This new heart is clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. In other words, instead of being dead in sin, your child is now alive in Christ. This means that where honoring God and pleasing Him were once impossible, that is no longer the case. Now your child will have the capacity and the desire to live a life that honors God. Fundamentally, your child has had a heart change which now make Christlikeness possible (cf. Phil 3:7-11; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 4:20-24; Col 3:1-4, 9-11).

Second, the presence of Christ means they are never alone.

Regardless of what is happening around them or to them, Jesus is with them. He will never leave them or forsake them. He is with them always (Matthew 28:20). Let this sink into your heart and into your children's hearts, Jesus goes with you; therefore, you are never alone.

"Let this sink into your heart and into your children's hearts, Jesus goes with you; therefore, you are never alone."

Third, the power of Christ's resurrection works in you and your children.

That power of course is realized through the Holy Spirit. This power is the same power that raised Jesus from the grave, seated Christ on the right hand of the throne of God, put all things under Christ's feet, and made Him the head of the church (Ephesians 1:19-23). That power works in your child. Your child has resurrection power enabling him or her to be and do everything God desires.

"Your child has resurrection power enabling him or her to be and do everything God desires."

The Benefits of Jesus Christ for Your Children Are Incredible.

Put all of this together and you have one incredible package of blessings for your children as they face school this new school year and life in general. Will there be temptation? Yes. Will there be times of loneliness? Yes. Will there be peer pressure? Yes. Will there be times they are tired and worn out? Yes. Yes to all these things of course. However, the righteousness, presence, and power of Christ provides them everything they need to live a God-honoring life (2 Pet 1:3).

Key Bible Passages to Help

- “As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,” (2 Peter 1:3).
- “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (2 Cor 5:17).
- “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Phil 3:7-11).
- “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

"The good news - the righteousness, presence, and power of Christ makes living for God's glory possible."

Teaching Opportunities for Parents

- Have your child memorize (or better yet, have the entire family memorize) one or two of the key verses above. Be sure you explain them clearly for your child to understand what they mean.
- Take time to pray with your children to ask God to help them remember all the resources they have in Christ – His righteousness, His presence, and His power.
- Be very specific as to the presence of Christ. Many children get lonely in the midst of a school day and long for friendships of various sorts. Help your child remember that Christ is always with him or her. Remind him or her that prayer is a way to talk to God, that God listens, and that God cares.
- God speaks to your child through the Bible verses they memorize, review, and remember. So make sure that you are regularly reviewing Bible verses with your children so that they keep the Scriptures on their hearts and minds.
- There are several ways to help your children understand these principles. One illustration for the power of the resurrection that works in your child through the Holy Spirit is like a plugged in lamp. Although the lamp is plugged in, a good light bulb is installed, and it is helpful, until someone actually turns it on, there is no benefit from the power that is available. Your children need to depend upon the Spirit, remember key passages, and be grateful for the power of the Spirit working in them.

LOVING OTHERS

As your child heads off to do school, regardless of the setting, one of the daily goals is to fulfill the second great commandment – to love your neighbor as yourself. Creatively loving your neighbor is a challenge for all children as they strive to live a life of faithful obedience to Christ. However, when children learn to love others well, they fulfill the great commandment and become salt and light to those around them.

Loving Others is a sign of maturing faith in Christ.

By nature every child is both selfish and foolish (James 1:13-16; Prov 22:15). A child does not have to be taught how to be selfish. There are no lessons in how to want what another child has. We never have to sit down and teach our children to cry, pout, or wine if



they do not get what they want. I've never heard of a parent teaching their children to want the last brownie, last chip, or to always try to get in the front of the line. These things come natural to all children, because all children are sinners.

Every person since Adam is me-oriented. The most important person in the universe of every person in the universe is self. Several times the Bible uses love of self as a measuring stick to see how you love others. Why would Jesus and others do this? Because every individual loves self. That is true to your child or children as well – and your child's parents.

Therefore, whenever we emphasize, teach, and then see our children choosing to love others, this is a sign of budding maturity. It is not natural. We must teach our children the principle of loving others and then help them think through the implications for daily living with others. In addition, we need to model it in front of them – which may be the much bigger challenge.

The motivation for loving others first

In order to love well, our children must have the proper motivation. Again, selfishness is natural. Therefore, we want them to learn to live in a very unnatural way. How? We teach them the love of Christ. Paul says, "For the love of Christ controls us..." (2 Cor 5:14). We observe the love that Christ has for us and it motivates us to want to love others in similar ways. In that way, the love Christ has for us controls what we do because it motivates us.

Paul continues, "because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no

longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Cor 5:14-15). In other words, when we clearly see the love Christ has for us, we are motivated to want to live for others rather than self – since that is exactly what Jesus did for us.

"We must teach our children the principle of loving others and then help them think through the implications for daily living with others."

The results of being motivated by the love of Christ

There are incredible results in the lives of our children when we help them learn to be motivated by the love of Christ. Here are just a few.

- They are salt and light to those around which they live. Whether it is at home or in a school of some kind, our children act as salt and light. Why? Because the vast majority of other children will not be motivated to selflessness and service. However, if you help your child understand the love of Christ and the second great commandment, then your child will appropriately stand out for Christ.

- They will exhibit wisdom beyond their years (James 3:13-18). As they learn to live selfless and thoughtful toward others, their motivation will be the love Christ has shown them which produces less envy, jealousy, and selfishness. The world's wisdom is driven by those things. Wisdom from God begins with the right motivation and then looks out for others.
- They will serve others. Paul makes it clear that for the believer, God provides daily energy in order for us to fulfill the great commandment and serve others. He writes, "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (Gal 5:13). Liberty here means that you do not have to earn your salvation. God saves you and keeps you saved. Instead, you can use your energy for much bigger and better things – serving others in love.

"...when we clearly see the love Christ has for us, we are motivated to want to live for others rather than self - since that is exactly what Jesus did for us."

Key Bible Passages to Help

- "Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love you neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."" (Matthew 22:37-40).
- "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Cor 5:14-15).
- "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil 2:3-4).
- "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13).
- "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-16).
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Teaching Opportunities for Parents

- Have your child memorize (or better yet, have the entire family memorize) one or two of the key verses above. Be sure you explain them clearly for your child to understand what they mean.
- Take time to pray with your children to ask God to help them remember the love Jesus has for them and how that love should motivate them to love others.
- Give your children several scenarios and have them respond with two possible options: a selfish response and a loving response. Have fun with your examples. Try to help them think through it carefully. Laugh with them as they discuss the selfish examples and then praise them for great responses to the selfless examples. (We laugh not because sin is funny; instead, we laugh because we all realize how silly it is to respond in these ways but we have all done it at times.)
- After you have done this, do it again and again. Your children will need lots of help practicing love over selfishness.

"Creatively loving your neighbor is a challenge for all children as they strive to live a life of faithful obedience to Christ."

- Illustration: Use an unopened bottle of water as your example. If the unopened water represents all the energy your child has in a day, all of that energy is to be used to lovingly serve others rather than self (Gal 5:13-6:5). They do not have to use one ounce of their energy in order to earn or keep their salvation. Instead, God handles our eternal security. Since that is the case, He expects us to use our energy to serve other people. He takes care of the most important part with His energy for us – salvation; we take care of the rest with our own energy – serving others out of love.

LIVING CONSISTENT

As a follower of Christ, one of the greatest challenges is living consistent with what Christ has done in us and desires to do through us. This is also true for our children as they face another school year. As young followers of Christ, God has done great and mighty things in them. This new work God started makes it possible for them to now live a life that honors Him. Paul states it this way. "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech

you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called," (Eph 4:1). The challenge is to live worthy of God's incredible call to be a follower of Him (cf. Eph 2:1-10). Paul begins using the word "walk" throughout the last half of the book of Ephesians as he makes a case that every believer, including our children as they go back to school, should live consistent in our walk with Jesus Christ.



You are no longer what you used to be.

Before having a personal relationship with Christ, it was impossible to honor Jesus in our daily living. We failed by nature and by action the challenge to live Christlike. The goal eluded us as we went about each day living for self and selfishly rather than for Christ and selflessly.

But this is no longer that case. Now as believers in Christ, God's power makes it possible to desire and do those things that honor Him. Therefore, we should no longer live the way we used to live (Eph 4:17-19); instead, we should now live for Christ (Eph 4:20-24).

God has made this possible because He took our old man away, which was characterized by a slavery to our own desires, and gave us a new man, which is created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. This disposition change makes all the difference in the world.

"God's goal is that every day we read the Bible, consider its meaning, and then determine how it applies to living wisely for the glory of God."

Put Off – Put On – Grow Daily

God uses the commands to “put off” and to “put on” to help us understand our attitudes, desires, and behaviors after we get saved.

As you would consider clothing, you put one thing off and put another thing on. The same idea exists as a Christian. God, when you were saved in Christ, put off your old man and put on your new man. Now, using the same analogy, we each are challenged to put off the old man attitudes, desires, and behaviors and put on the new man attitudes, desires, and behaviors.

In Ephesians, we are given five specific examples of what it looks like to live consistent as a follower of Christ (Eph 4:25-32). Here are Paul's five examples:

- Put off lying; Put on truth-telling (Eph 4:25);
- Put off ungodly anger; Put on godly anger (Eph 4:26-27);
- Put off stealing; Put on working with your hands for the benefit of others (Eph 4:28);
- Put off corrupt words; Put on edifying words with impart grace and do not grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:29-30);
- Put off bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking with malice; put on kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness like Christ (Eph 4:31-32).

God's goal is that every day we read the Bible, consider its meaning, and then determine how it applies to living wisely for the glory of God (to be renewed in our minds, Eph 4:23). This process leads to identifying those places that need to be changed, determining best what godliness looks like in those same areas, and then putting forth the effort to live consistent with God's goals and desires. The “put off – put on – grow daily process” must be discussed, clarified, and practiced with our children as they seek to live in honor of God every day throughout the new school year.

Key Bible Passages to Help

- “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,” (Ephesians 4:1).
- “That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24).
- “Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another. “Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:25-32; cf., Col 3:5-17)

Teaching Opportunities for Parents

- Have your child memorize (or better yet, have the entire family memorize) one or two of the key verses above. Be sure you explain them clearly for your child to understand what they mean.

- Take time to pray with your children to ask God to help them remember that change is possible and that God gives them the strength to change.
- Illustration: Pull out some jackets or large shirts to use as your props to explain the put off – put on process. Begin with salvation. Have one jacket represent the old man, and another jacket represent the new man. Place the old man jacket on and describe how the heart can not honor God and how the unbeliever is a slave to serving self for his own glory and lives according to his own desires. Then talk about salvation. When you talk about salvation, describe how God takes the old man off and places the new man on (the second jacket). The new man now gives the believer the possibility of loving and obeying Jesus. This is what happens on the inside of the believer at the spiritual heart. Now use the same illustration to explain how the child is to put off attitudes, desires, thinking, and behavior that does not honor God and replace that with attitudes, desires, thinking, and behavior that does honor God.
- Give your children several scenarios and have them respond with the appropriate answers: for example, if Joey is asked a question and tells a lie, does that represent old man or new man? Why? You can do this with many examples both from Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3 as well as examples you come up with on your own.

"The challenge is to live worthy of God's incredible call to be a follower of Him."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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