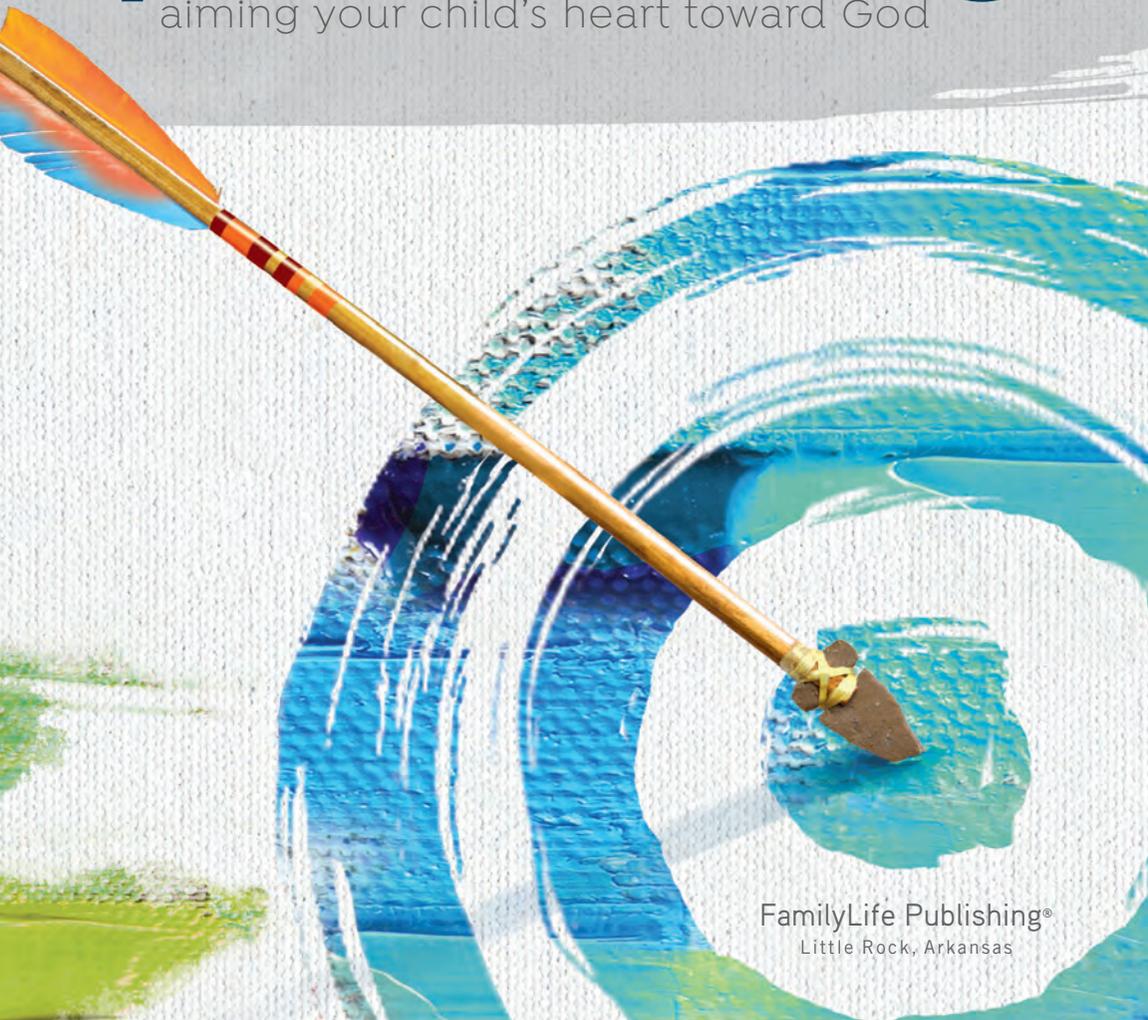


workbook

familylife's art of  
**parenting**™  
aiming your child's heart toward God



FamilyLife Publishing®  
Little Rock, Arkansas

## **FamilyLife's Art of Parenting™ Workbook**

FamilyLife Publishing®  
5800 Ranch Drive  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72223  
1-800-FL-TODAY • FamilyLife.com  
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ISBN: 978-1-60200-889-2

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Photography: iStockphoto  
Design: Meraki Life Designs

Printed in the United States of America

22 21 20 19 18    1 2 3 4 5

**FAMILYLIFE®**  
Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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## GLOSSARY OF BIBLE PASSAGES

# familylife's art of parenting™

small-group series

A family was enjoying lunch one Sunday when the subject of children obeying their parents came up. Anxious to join the conversation, the seven-year-old daughter said, “Yeah, but parents aren’t supposed to aspirate their children!”

She had it right . . . almost. Ephesians 6:4 says, “Fathers, do not *exasperate* your children (NIV).”

The same verse goes on to say, “instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” This is the purpose of FamilyLife’s Art of Parenting—to help you set up a parenting framework that is biblical, reliable, and intentional. In other words, to help you aim your child’s heart toward God.



This workbook synchronizes with the eight video sessions. In it you’ll find session outlines, blanks for note taking, Take Aim exercises (to be completed during the sessions), instructions for the Arrow Projects (to be completed between the sessions), and supplemental content for further reflection. You’ll want to have the workbook open and ready when the video starts.

session **one**

THE GOAL OF

# *Parenting*



Behold, children are a heritage  
from the LORD, the fruit of the womb  
a reward. Like arrows in the hand of  
a warrior are the children of one's youth.  
Blessed is the man who fills his  
quiver with them!

—Psalm 127:3-5



## keys to intentional parenting

- Parenting goes better with a firm foundation and a set plan.
- Focus on the heart of your children more than their behavior.
- Parents are the primary example their children will follow.
- God should be the core of your parenting, not just a component.
- Keep your marriage the priority relationship in your home.



## the goal of parenting

Parenting is a challenge because so much is at stake. The moment a crying baby makes his appearance in the delivery room, or a judge signs the documents to make the adoption official, the responsibility of another human being falls on your shoulders and on your heart. You're determined to do it right—to provide well, to teach and train effectively, and eventually to launch a responsible adult into the world.

How?

Dennis Rainey has identified four essential areas of development that children need to learn from their parents. They need to be trained in **(1) Character, (2) Relationships, (3) Identity, and (4) Mission.**

Don't let the low number fool you. There may be only four, but each one is a life-changer.

“A healthy marriage creates the context for healthy parenting which creates the context for happy kids. So if you want happy kids . . . swim upstream and work on a good marriage.”

–Phil Vischer

“In a world full of hypocrisy, it is so powerful when a child comes home and sees authentic Christianity lived out there.”

–Stephen Kendrick



“If we do nothing intentional, we’re going to release narcissistic, entitled individuals who think the world revolves around them. We need to create in our children an others-centered view of life.”

—Bryan Loritts



## your priorities as a parent

- Setting priorities helps parents define what success in life really means.
- Setting priorities requires parents to consider what kind of adults they want their children to become.
- Setting priorities means parents must realize that their children have eternal souls.

*video notes*

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# choosing your priorities



If an **A** priority means “I **MUST** teach my child this,” a **B** priority means “I **SHOULD** teach my child this,” and a **C** priority means “I **MIGHT** teach my child this,” mark each of the following statements with an **A**, **B**, or **C**.

- I want my child to show respect.
- I want my child to excel academically.
- I want my child to be popular.
- I want my child to know and love Christ.
- I want my child to excel in sports, the arts, or in some special interest.
- I want my child to attend college.
- I want my child to have a good reputation.
- I want my child to be my friend.
- I want my child to get married and have a family.
- I want my child to share their faith with others.
- I want my child to know how to repair things.
- I want my child to enjoy the same activities that I do.
- I want my child to be generous.

If there is still time on the clock, list a few of your own **A** priorities below.

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“Here’s the tricky part for blended families. When a stepparent enters the picture, the family has to reorganize. You have to move the children to the back seat, so to speak, and move that stepparent into the front seat, where the couple can lead from a position of unity. They have to be a team.”

—Ron Deal



# strong marriage, secure children

- Each child adds a chapter to the story your marriage is telling.
- You build security in your children when they know they can’t come between you and your spouse.
- Never stop dating your spouse!

*video notes*

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# parents need mentors

-  If you were not parented well, work to develop a framework for parenting your own children.
-  Surround yourself with people you admire and who have parented their children well.
-  Single parents, mentors can be allies in raising your children.



**“We don’t have to learn everything the hard way. We can learn from those that are doing it right.”**

**—Stephen Kendrick**

*video notes*

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## who's your mentor?

Your mentors should be people you admire, who have more parenting experience than you, and who have parented their children well. List the names of 3-5 people you would like to have as mentors. If there's time left, list one thing you would like to learn from each person on your list.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# what you model matters

-  Your children need to see it, not just hear it.
-  Connecting faith to life through everyday conversations and activities makes it more authentic and believable.



**“God can do in us what we want to see Him do in our kids. It’s an overflow.”**

**—Dave Wilson**

*video notes*

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Behold, children  
are a heritage,  
from the Lord,  
the fruit of the womb a reward.

Like arrows  
in the hand of a warrior  
are the children of one's youth.

Blessed is the man  
who fills his  
quiver with them!

Psalm 127:3-5

# The Goal of *Parenting* discussion questions

1. What was your reaction to the news of your first pregnancy, adoption, or becoming a stepparent?
2. What advice would you offer to first-time or expectant parents?
3. Name some of the issues that confront many new parents. Did you face any of these issues? What did you do (or are you doing) to work through them?
4. A lot of emphasis was given in the video to the importance of prioritizing marriage. Why is this so important to your parenting?
5. If you had a parenting mentor, what question(s) would you ask him or her today?
6. Name one attitude, habit, or characteristic that you hope your children will pick up from you and carry into their own adulthood. Conversely, name one attitude, habit, or characteristic that you hope your children will not pick up from you.

## 10 ways to keep your marriage a priority

- 1. Pray together every day.** Praying together builds soul-level intimacy, helping you to grow stronger in your love for God and for each other. A good time to do this may be before you go to sleep at night. (As a way to get started, sign up for a 30-day couple's prayer guide at [FamilyLife.com/OnenessPrayerChallenge](https://www.familylife.com/OnenessPrayerChallenge).)
- 2. Be intentional about growing together spiritually.** As you seek God together as a couple, you will also draw closer to each other. Spend time reading the Bible together or reading from a devotional book.
- 3. Have meaningful conversation with each other every day.** Good communication is one of the keys to building a successful marriage. Set aside a few minutes each evening, after the kids have gone to bed, to ask about each other's day, laugh about fun memories, talk about your hopes, dream together about your future, and so on. And don't try to compete with the TV—turn it off.
- 4. Find practical ways to serve each other.** Serving your spouse with love, joy, and creativity demonstrates that their happiness means more to you than your own. Love expressed through service is sure to strengthen your marriage.
- 5. Give thanks for each other often.** Express appreciation to God and to your spouse for the gift of each other. Giving thanks for each other is an acknowledgement that you value your relationship. That which you appreciate, you cherish.
- 6. Develop some common interests.** Find an activity or hobby that you will both enjoy doing together. Take a cooking class, learn how to ballroom dance, support your favorite sports



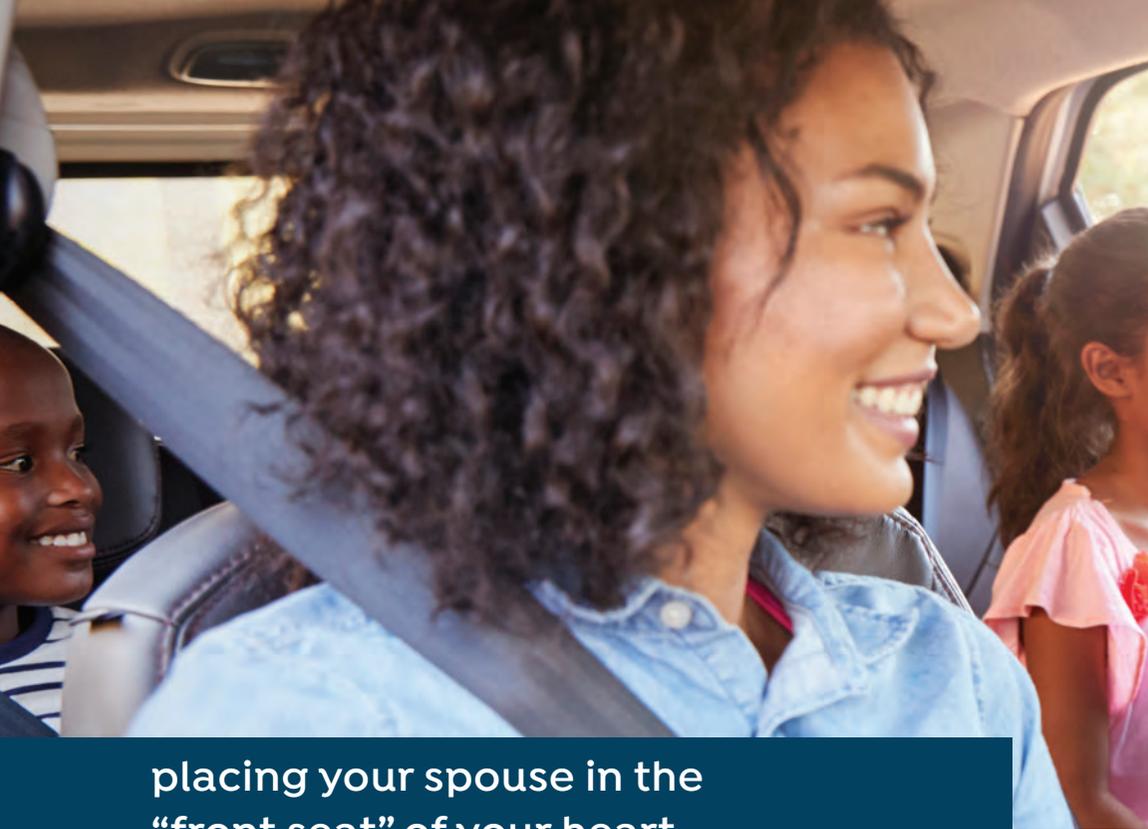
team, go bike riding, etc. Mutual interests and shared experiences will deepen your friendship and enrich your marriage.

**7. Fan the flames of romance.** Romance helps keep the relationship alive, fresh, and exciting. Have candlelight dinners, write passionate love letters to each other, surprise each other with a gift from time to time “just because,” flirt with each other, and build anticipation for fun, steamy nights.

**8. Have regular date nights.** These special times together will do wonders for your relationship. Plan a fun night out at least once a month. If circumstances prevent you from going out, plan a stay-at-home date for after the kids are in bed. The point is, be intentional. Put it on the calendar and hold to your plans. (For ideas, see the books *Dates on a Dime* and *Coffee Dates for Couples* at FamilyLife.com.)

**9. Take overnight or weekend trips together—without the kids.** These getaways allow you to take a break from the everyday responsibilities of life and parenting to focus on each other.

**10. Tune-up your marriage regularly.** You can do this by attending or leading a small-group study for couples, or by attending an annual marriage retreat or conference. (See Weekend to Remember® getaway details in the back of this workbook.) These habits will help keep your relationship vibrant and strong.



## placing your spouse in the “front seat” of your heart

by ron deal

God’s design for the family begins with marriage laying the foundation for the home. But stepfamilies are at a disadvantage. Why? Because at the inception of a stepfamily, married couples find it difficult to establish their relationship as the foundation. After all, parent-child relationships predate the new marriage and are bonded by blood, history, and family identity. When a husband and wife bring children into their new marriage, they often find their marriage is the secondary relationship. And unless they find a way to make the marriage primary, they will experience distress and instability in the home.

The process of establishing the couple as the foundational relationship of the home can feel like a win-lose situation for



biological parents and children—the marriage wins, the children lose. But this is not the case. It's a matter of significance. It's not that a spouse matters more than children, but rather that a *strong marriage relationship contributes more significantly to the stability of the home than any other factor—including the children.*

Your children will never suffer neglect because you make a strong commitment to your new spouse. You don't have to choose between your spouse and your children; when you make your marriage your primary priority, you are actually choosing both. Placing your spouse in the “front seat” of your heart is good for your children, too. In fact, a healthy marriage means safety and protection for children.

How can couples establish their relationship as the foundation of the home when children preceded the marriage? Here are some practical tips:

- 1. Set a regular date night and keep it.** Prioritizing time for one another helps your children see the importance you place on your relationship.
- 2. Strive to trust the heart of your spouse.** Assume your spouse has goodwill toward your children even if they complain. Strive to give your spouse equal say in parenting decisions; be a team.
- 3. Support your spouse in front of your children.** Back up your spouse's decisions and insist that all the children in the household respect those decisions.
- 4. Affirm your commitment "out loud."** Verbally expressing love to one another in front of the children, hugging in plain sight, and talking about your future together reinforce the permanency of your marriage.
- 5. Spend one-on-one time with your biological children and remain involved in their activities.** This reinforces that they haven't "lost" you and paradoxically makes their acceptance of your marriage easier.
- 6. Insist "out loud" that your spouse spend special time with his or her biological children.** This communicates that you are not in competition with them.
- 7. Don't let your children manipulate you through guilt.** It's natural for children to show signs of stress or anxiety as you "move your spouse into the front seat of your heart." Be sympathetic

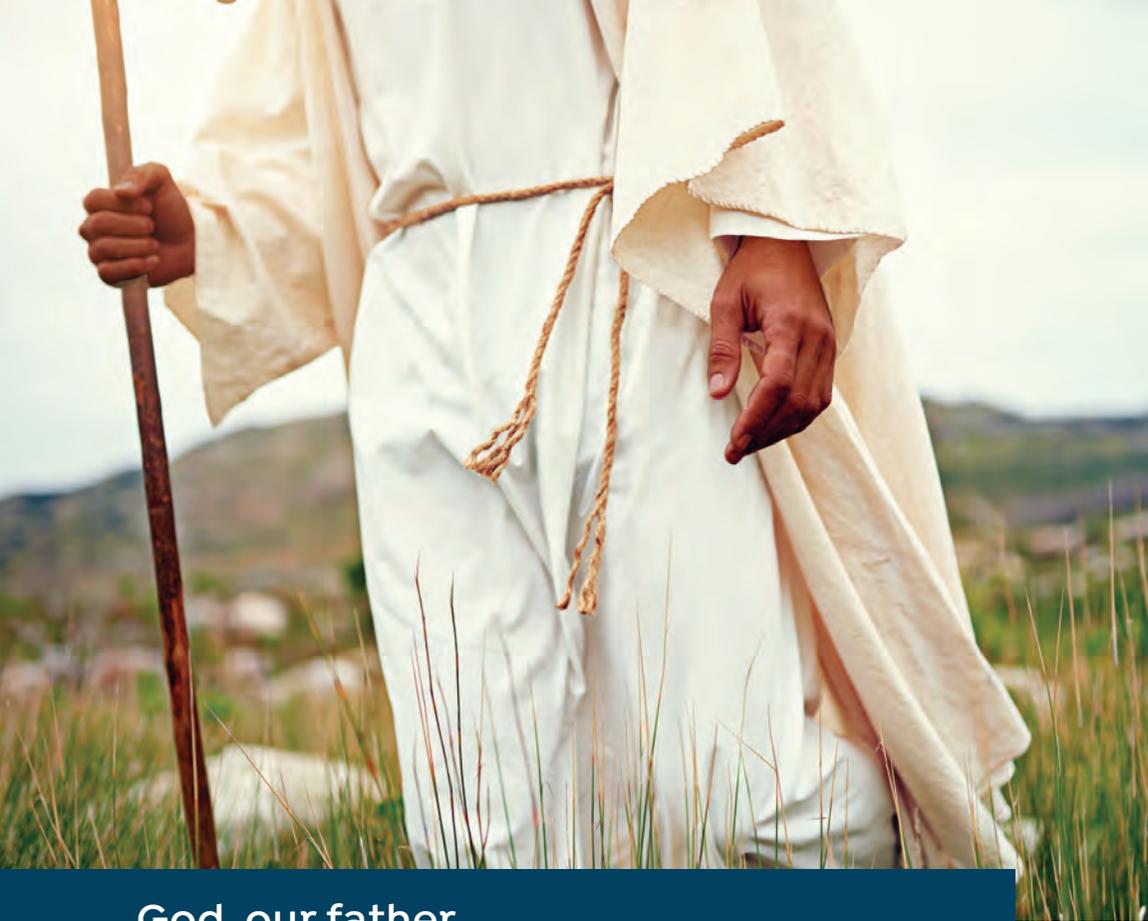
but don't let them manipulate you into taking their side. Just because children hand you a ticket for a guilt-trip doesn't mean you have to go for the ride!

**8. When children challenge the role of the stepparent, respond firmly and with compassion.** "You're just changing the rule because she wants you to," is a common complaint. Acknowledge the child's confusion and move forward. "You're right. Things are different now that Linda and I parent together. And you know if I were you, I'd be upset about this, too. But this is the new rule and I'm in agreement with it, so please abide by it. Let's go."

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Ron L. Deal, "Placing Your Spouse in the 'Front Seat' of Your Heart," (2012): [www.familylife.com/articles/topics/blended-family/remarriage/staying-married/placing-your-spouse-in-the-front-seat-of-your-heart](http://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/blended-family/remarriage/staying-married/placing-your-spouse-in-the-front-seat-of-your-heart).





## God, our father

In the Old Testament, the word *Father* is used in reference to God only 15 times. In the New Testament, it is used over 165 times—in the first four books alone. Why the great increase? Answer: Jesus.

Jesus often called God *Father*. There's no surprise here; God is Jesus' Father. But what should amaze us is that God wants to be our Father, too! Jesus made this clear, and in fact, this is why He came to earth—to extend the invitation and to become the way for each person who would believe in Him to become a child of God.

**But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)**

Jesus Christ came to offer Himself as a sacrifice for us, to pay the penalty of our sin. He made it possible for us to be forgiven, to be made righteous, to become children of God. In Christ we are no longer distant from God. Christ offers us the salvation we each so desperately need but could never earn.

**But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Ephesians 2:13)**

One of our deepest longings is to be loved, and one of our greatest needs is to give love. Christ is the answer to both. In Him our desire to be loved is met, and our ability to love has been initiated.

**We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)**

In Christ alone can we become the men and women, husbands and wives, dads and moms that God intends. As we grow up in Christ, becoming more like Him, we are able to share and model His life to others.

If you would like to know more about the way of salvation through Christ, please visit [Cru.org/us/en/how-to-know-God](https://Cru.org/us/en/how-to-know-God).



We're brand new parents and feeling overwhelmed. How can we be sure we're doing this parenting thing right?



I feel like it's too late to implement some of this teaching. Any suggestions for making up for lost time?



We're not in agreement about our parenting styles. What should we do?



**Go online at [FamilyLife.com/parenting](https://www.familylife.com/parenting)**

to access age-graded video discussions, articles, and other resources to help with your parenting questions and challenges.

# what are your core values?



What do you believe in? What matters most to you? What values govern your life? What beliefs and values do you want to pass on to your children?

Most people make choices according to a few of the core values they hold, but many have never been challenged to articulate and analyze those values. Here's your opportunity to do just that.

Because your children will learn from your actions and lifestyle more than your words, you need to take an honest look at what your life is actually teaching them. For example, if you say that one of your core values is, "My family comes before my job," but you regularly choose work over family time, then they will conclude that your actual value is, "My job comes before my family."

This project is designed to help you get a realistic view of your core values so that you can begin making any adjustments that may be needed.

Complete Part One on your own, and then interact with your spouse on Part Two.

## **Single Parents:**

Ask a married couple, trusted friend, or mentor to meet with you and talk through this project with you.

## Part One

(20–30 Minutes)

Answer the following questions individually.

- A. List the values you would like to pass on to your children. These could include character values, as well as spiritual, relational, and moral. You should also consider values that will affect your child's life within the family, the civic community, the workplace, and the culture at large.

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- B. From the list you just developed, choose the five values that are most important to you. Write them, in order of priority, in the space below.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**C.** Reflect on your own lifestyle. How well does your life align with the five core values you listed? Describe any adjustments you need to make.

**D.** Do you and your spouse work together to live according to shared core values? What can you be doing to help each other in this area?

## Part Two

(10–15 Minutes)

Interact as a couple.

A. Discuss your answers from Part One. In what areas do you agree and disagree with each other's conclusions? Talk about how you can come to agreement and support each other by sharing the same core values.

B. Develop a list of ten core values, in order of priority, that you both agree should be part of your family's life.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

**C. Discuss how you can teach and model these core values to your children.**

**D. Pray together, asking God to enable you to live according to the core values that will please Him and point your children to know, honor, and love Him.**

**Note:** Starting with the next session, you will begin filling out an Arrow Chart for each of your children. Take the chart out now, from the back of the book, and write your child's name on the chart. Additional charts can be downloaded from [FamilyLife.com/Parenting](http://FamilyLife.com/Parenting).

### **Blended Family Bonus**

Read *Placing Your Spouse in the Front Seat of Your Heart* (page 16). Discuss your insights and this question: If someone asked your kids if you have placed each other in the front seat, what would your kids say?

# Parenting . . . It's not all on you.

Being a mom or dad is one of the most rewarding jobs you'll ever have. And one of the most challenging. The baby that won't sleep grows into a toddler that won't eat who becomes an adolescent that won't communicate. Not every day is a bad day, but all parents need some help and encouragement along the way.

There is an approach to parenting that can reduce the stress and increase the harmony in your home. Based on decades of teaching from Dennis and Barbara Rainey, and featuring insights from other notable parenting advisors, *FamilyLife's Art of Parenting*<sup>™</sup> highlights four core issues that every parent and child need to address together.

## The eight sessions are:

THE GOAL OF *Parenting*

FORMING *Character*

APPLYING *Discipline*

BUILDING *Relationships*

UNDERSTANDING *Identity*

NURTURING *Identity*

PREPARING FOR *Mission*

THE POWER OF *Family*

\*Additional workbooks sold separately.

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ISBN 978-1-60200-889-2



ID #: WKB19734