

# PRACTICAL APPLICATION GUIDE

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## BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE: The Legacy You Leave in Your Children

FREE COMPANION MATERIAL

### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to your tool for transformation.

If you are reading this, it is because you made an important decision. You did not only read a book about fatherhood. You decided you wanted more. You wanted tools. Action. Concrete steps. That already sets you apart.

Most fathers read a parenting book, feel inspired for a few days, and then drift back into the same patterns. But you do not want to be "most fathers." You want to become the father your children actually need. This guide exists to help you do that.

When I wrote *Before It's Too Late*, I knew I was sharing vulnerable stories, painful lessons, and principles that took me years to learn. I also knew something else: inspiration without application quickly becomes entertainment.

You can be moved by a chapter on prayer, identity, failure, or presence—but if nothing changes in your actual life with your children, the book remains on a shelf and the old patterns remain in place. I do not want that for you.

I did not write this book so you would feel challenged for a week. I wrote it so your children would see a real difference in you. I wrote it so that years from now they might say, "My dad was not perfect, but he was present—and that changed my life."

This guide is meant to help bridge the gap between inspiration and transformation.

### What you will find in this guide

- Condensed chapter summaries
- Six personal reflection questions for each chapter
- Five small-group discussion questions
- A seven-day challenge with concrete next steps
- A prayer connected to each chapter
- Key verses to meditate on and memorize

### How to use this guide

OPTION 1 — INDIVIDUAL USE (The Intentional Father)

1. Read one chapter of the book.
2. Immediately afterward, work through the guide for that chapter.
3. Answer the six personal reflection questions slowly and honestly.
4. Choose the seven-day challenge and begin right away.

5. Mark your progress in your calendar or journal.
6. Move to the next chapter only after you have completed the challenge.

Recommended pace: one chapter per week with its seven-day challenge.

#### OPTION 2 — USE AS A COUPLE (The Parenting Team)

7. Read the chapter together, or each on your own.
8. Set aside about an hour to work through the guide together.
9. Each spouse answers the personal reflection questions individually.
10. Share your responses without interrupting or judging.
11. Choose the weekly challenge together and decide how you will live it out.
12. Check in with each other during the week.
13. At the end of the week, ask: What worked? What did not? What did we learn?

#### OPTION 3 — SMALL GROUP USE (A Community of Fathers)

14. Each person reads the chapter during the week.
15. Each father works through the reflection questions on his own.
16. Use the small-group questions during your meeting.
17. Share honestly and keep what is shared confidential.
18. At the end of the meeting, each father names the challenge he will implement that week.
19. At the next gathering, begin by reporting back.

#### Five rules if you want this to work

20. Do not rush through the whole guide. This is not a novel. It is an action plan.
21. Write your answers. Writing forces honesty and clarity.
22. Actually do the seven-day challenges. Reading them is not the same thing as living them.
23. Invite accountability. Tell someone what you plan to do and when.
24. Give yourself grace. This is about progress, not perfection.

#### My prayer for you

Father, I do not know this man's name, his story, or the exact battles he is facing. But You do. You know he picked up this guide because he loves his children and wants to be better.

So I pray that You would give him courage to answer hard questions honestly, wisdom to know what his family needs most right now, perseverance to keep going when change feels slow, and grace to begin again when he fails.

Give him vision to see that every small step he takes today is shaping the legacy he will leave tomorrow. His children are worth every effort, every awkward conversation, every moment he sets the phone aside and looks them in the eyes, every prayer he prays with them. In Jesus' name, amen.

#### Now begin

The window is open—but it will not stay open forever.

Turn the page and begin with Chapter 1. May God bless you in this journey of transformation.

—Helmuth

## CONTACT

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## CHAPTER 1

### TEACH THEM TO PRAY

“Call to Me, and I will answer you and show you great and hidden things that you have not known.” —  
Jeremiah 33:3

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

Many Christian parents are raising children who know about prayer but do not know how to pray honestly. They know the right words, but when real pain comes—the kind that does not fit into a tidy prayer—they do not know what to do with it.

The key story in this chapter is Kevin’s crisis in England. He did not learn honest prayer mainly from formal lessons. He learned it by watching his mother, Erika, cry out to God during her battle with cancer. He saw prayer without polished language—only need, dependence, and faith.

The central lesson is simple: prayer is not taught mainly through techniques. It is taught through example. Your children learn to pray when they see you do it in the moments when there are no easy answers—when you pray confused, frustrated, broken, or in tears.

By age and stage, prayer looks different. With babies it can be spoken blessing and covering. With young children it becomes permission to be honest. With teenagers it often becomes an emotional bridge. With adult children it often becomes intercession and specific prayer support.

Strong faith often pretends to have everything settled. Honest faith says, “I do not know what to do, but I know where to turn.”

### PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Take 10–15 minutes in silence to answer these questions honestly.

25. How did you learn—or fail to learn—to pray? Who shaped your view of prayer?
26. Have your children seen you pray when you did not know what to do?
27. If your child had to describe prayer only by watching you, what would he or she say?
28. What most keeps you from praying honestly with your children: shame, fear, or not knowing what to say?
29. If your child faced a devastating crisis tomorrow, would he or she know how to cry out to God? Why or why not?
30. Are you praying now in the way you hope your children will pray in the future?

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LEADER’S NOTE: These questions are meant to create honest conversation, not polished answers.

31. Think about your own childhood. What message did you receive about prayer from the adults in your life?
32. Would you say your children currently know about prayer, or know how to pray? Why?
33. Do your children see prayer in your home as honesty before God, or mainly as religious formality?
34. Which practical application from this chapter will you begin this week with your children?
35. When your child is twenty-five and in crisis, what do you hope he or she will have learned from you about prayer?

## 7-DAY CHALLENGE

Do not wait for a perfect moment. Start now, even if it feels awkward.

DAY 1–7 — Young children — Ask each night, “What do you want to tell God today?”

- Accept any honest answer.
- Keep the prayer short.
- Do not correct the content.
- End by saying, “God hears imperfect prayers.”

DAY 1–3 — Older children — Ask, “If you could ask God for one thing without being judged, what would it be?”

- Listen without interrupting.
- Do not rush to respond.

DAY 4–5 — Teens — Text or say, “I prayed for you today. If you want to tell me why, I’m here.”

- Offer prayer; do not force it.
- Ask permission before praying out loud for them.

DAY 6–7 — Adult children — Send one short message each day.

- “I’m praying for you today. If there’s something specific, tell me.”
- Do not add a sermon.

## SPACE FOR YOUR REFLECTIONS AND COMMITMENTS

What God showed me in this chapter:

My biggest blind spot in this area:

My specific commitment for this week:

Who will hold me accountable?

## **MY PRAYER AS A FATHER/MOTHER**

Father in heaven, I confess that I do not always know how to pray with my children. Sometimes I feel awkward, uncomfortable, and without words. But my children do not need my religious polish; they need to see honest faith. Help me come to You openly in front of them. Let them learn to cry out to You not because I taught them a technique, but because they saw me come to You when I had no answers. Give me courage to begin today. In Jesus' name, amen.

## **VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK**

“These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children...” — Deuteronomy 6:6–7

## CHAPTER 2

### BE INTENTIONAL OR YOU WILL LOSE THE RELATIONSHIP

“Be strong and courageous... for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” — Joshua 1:9

#### CHAPTER SUMMARY

Many fathers confuse physical presence with emotional presence. They are in the house, at the table, or at the game—but mentally somewhere else. Children notice. Lucas said it best: “Daddy, look at me with your eyes.”

A dangerous lie says, “Quality time matters more than quantity.” The chapter challenges that idea. Deep moments of connection cannot always be scheduled. They happen when your children are ready, not when your calendar opens up.

Sofia later revealed that one of her favorite childhood memories was not an expensive gift or trip. It was that her father learned the names of all the princesses and all her friends. Those small acts told her that her world mattered to him.

The three major thieves of presence are work, the phone, and emotional exhaustion. Left unchecked, they train children to stop trying to connect.

There is a window during which children keep reaching toward their father. That window does not remain open forever. Intentionality means entering their world before that window quietly closes.

#### PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Take 10–15 minutes in silence to answer these questions honestly.

36. Are you present with your children, or only near them? What is the difference in your case?
37. Which thief robs your emotional presence most: work, your phone, or exhaustion?
38. When was the last time one of your children shared something deep with you? Did it happen on your schedule or on theirs?
39. What matters most in the world of each of your children right now? Can you answer that specifically?
40. Considering your children’s current ages, how much time do you think you realistically have before the window narrows?
41. Are you repeating the pattern of your own father, or breaking it?

#### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LEADER’S NOTE: These questions are meant to create honest conversation, not polished answers.

42. Have your children ever said something—directly or indirectly—that made you realize you were physically present but emotionally absent?
43. Have you ever used “quality over quantity” to justify distance? How do you hear that idea now?
44. What would your children say matters most to them right now? How well do you know their worlds?
45. How did your own father’s presence or absence shape your habits now?
46. What one change will you make this week to become more available when your children are ready to connect?

#### 7-DAY CHALLENGE

For seven days, practice intentional presence in simple, concrete ways.

DAY 1–3 — Remove one distraction — Choose one distraction and eliminate it during time with your children.

- No phone at dinner.
- No TV after work.
- No checking email while they are talking.

DAY 4–5 — Ask better questions — Replace “How was your day?” with something more specific.

- Young children: “What was the most fun thing today?”
- Older children: “What was the hardest part of today?”
- Teens: “If you could change one thing about your day, what would it be?”
- Adult children: “How can I pray for you this week?”

DAY 6–7 — Enter their world — Do something they want to do.

- Dinosaurs, princesses, shopping, games—whatever matters to them.
- Do it without rushing or complaining.
- Do not check your phone.

## **SPACE FOR YOUR REFLECTIONS AND COMMITMENTS**

What God showed me in this chapter:

My biggest blind spot in this area:

My specific commitment for this week:

Who will hold me accountable?

## **MY PRAYER AS A FATHER/MOTHER**

Heavenly Father, I confess that I am often physically present and emotionally absent. My children deserve more than what is left over after my work, my phone, and my fatigue. Forgive me for the times I have been more connected to a screen than to their hearts. Help me lay distractions down. Give me energy when I am tired and remind me that these moments will not come back. The window is closing, and I do not want to wake up one day and realize I missed it. Give me intentionality, discipline, and love that chooses connection over convenience. In Jesus’ name, amen.

**VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK**

“Children are a heritage from the Lord...” — Psalm 127:3

“Impress them on your children...” — Deuteronomy 6:6–7

## CHAPTER 3

AFFIRM THEIR IDENTITY (Before the World Defines It)

“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation...” — 1 Peter 2:9

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

The world is always shouting messages about who your children should be, how they should look, and what they should have. If you do not give them a deeper foundation, those messages will help shape their identity.

In the chapter, Kevin and Sofia casually mention how kids at school judge one another by brands: Hydro Flask, Nike, Jordans. That moment becomes a doorway into intentional conversation about consumerism and identity. One conversation is not enough. It takes hundreds over time.

The chapter calls these identity substitutes “trivialities”—surface-level things people use to define themselves because they do not have something deeper anchoring them.

Before your children are students, achievers, athletes, or even your children, they are children of God. Their deepest identity is in Christ. That identity cannot be removed by failure, poverty, rejection, or opinion.

The chapter also speaks about gender, ethnicity, and relationships. It shows how children can begin losing themselves in a relationship, a social circle, or a cultural script unless their identity in Christ has become foundational.

### PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Take 10–15 minutes in silence to answer these questions honestly.

47. What “trivialities” are competing to define your children right now: brands, appearance, social status, performance, online approval?
48. Have you had intentional conversations with your children about consumerism, comparison, and identity in Christ? If not, what has kept you from doing so?
49. What part of your own identity was difficult for you to accept? How does that affect the way you form your children?
50. If you asked each child, “Who are you?” what do you think they would answer first?
51. Have you seen your children change who they are to fit in? How did you respond?
52. What unspoken message about identity are you communicating through your own habits of comparison, spending, or approval-seeking?

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LEADER’S NOTE: These questions are meant to create honest conversation, not polished answers.

53. What trivialities are most powerfully competing for your children’s identity right now?
54. What conversations about consumerism or comparison have you not had yet?
55. How has your own identity struggle shaped the way you parent?
56. When have you seen a child begin changing himself or herself to belong?
57. What can you do this week to make identity in Christ more concrete in your home?

### 7-DAY CHALLENGE

Identity is formed through repeated conversations, not one dramatic speech.

DAY 1–2 — Identify the competitors — Write down the surface-level things competing to define your children.

- Brands and logos
- Social circles
- Appearance
- Achievement
- Social media validation

DAY 3–4 — Have one conversation — Use something they notice—a commercial, trend, or comment—to ask questions.

- “What do you think they were really trying to sell you?”
- “What makes something ‘cool?’”
- Lead with questions, not lectures.

DAY 5–6 — Speak identity aloud — Say one specific truth over each child each day.

- Young children: “God made you and loves you.”
- Older children: “You are made in God’s image.”
- Teens: “Your value is not decided by likes, looks, or brands.”
- Young adults: “Remember who you are in Christ.”

DAY 7 — The mirror conversation — Place 3–5 truths on a mirror and read them together.

- Examples: “I am a child of God.” “My worth does not come from what I own.” “I was made on purpose.”
- Have them say the truths aloud while looking in the mirror.

## **SPACE FOR YOUR REFLECTIONS AND COMMITMENTS**

What God showed me in this chapter:

My biggest blind spot in this area:

My specific commitment for this week:

Who will hold me accountable?

## **MY PRAYER AS A FATHER/MOTHER**

Heavenly Father, in a world that constantly shouts messages about who my children should be, help me be the strongest voice reminding them who they really are. Protect their hearts from the trivial things that compete to define them. Let their worth not be tied to what they have, how they look, or who approves of them. Root their identity deeply in Christ, so deeply that the voices around them cannot move it. Give me wisdom for hard conversations and courage to intervene when I see them losing themselves. And help me model the same truth in my own life. In Jesus' name, amen.

## **VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK**

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works...” — Ephesians 2:10

## CHAPTER 4

TEACH THEM TO HONOR (Even When Others Do Not Deserve It)

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter begins with the author nearly leaving education in 2016, not only because of grief after Erika's death, but because he could feel the death of honor in student culture. After more than twenty years in the classroom, he has watched a generation struggle to honor teachers, parents, authority, and even themselves.

The most powerful story is personal. He grew up without a clear model of honor. His father was absent and irresponsible. His mother left, and he did not reconnect with her until later. Yet after coming to Christ, he learned that honor is not based first on whether someone deserves it. Honor grows out of who you are before God.

The chapter distinguishes obedience from honor. Obedience is required in childhood. Honor is lifelong. It remains even when you are no longer under direct authority.

Stories with Kevin, Sofia, and Lucas show how honor is taught in real life: honoring language and culture, honoring teachers, honoring a stepmother, honoring grandparents, and learning respectful speech and gratitude.

### PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Take 10–15 minutes in silence to answer these questions honestly.

58. How do you speak about your own parents in front of your children? Do you model honor even if the relationship is difficult?
59. Have you clearly taught your children the difference between obedience and honor?
60. How do you speak about teachers, bosses, pastors, and leaders in front of your children?
61. Have you talked specifically about honoring difficult people in complex family situations?
62. When was the last time you honored someone who did not “deserve” it? Did your children see it?
63. Do you correct disrespect in the moment, or do you let sarcasm, ingratitude, and dishonor slide?

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LEADER'S NOTE: These questions are meant to create honest conversation, not polished answers.

64. How does the statement “Honor depends on who you are, not on what the other person deserves” change your perspective?
65. Why is it dangerous to teach obedience without teaching honor?
66. Has anyone in the group had to honor a difficult father or mother? What did you learn?
67. How do blended families navigate honor toward stepparents or difficult relatives?
68. How do you stay patient when the fruit of honor takes years to appear?

### 7-DAY CHALLENGE

Spend one week actively sowing honor.

DAY 1 — Evaluate your model — Ask yourself how you speak about authority in front of your children.

- Where are you modeling bitterness instead of honor?

DAY 2 — Define honor — Explain the difference between obedience and honor to each child.

- Use examples from daily life.

DAY 3 — Correct disrespect — Pay attention to sarcasm, tone, and ingratitude.

- Correct it calmly and immediately.

DAY 4 — Model visible honor — Do something your children can see.

- Call your parents.
- Speak well of a teacher.
- Thank someone who serves.

DAY 5 — Address a hard relationship — If there is a complicated relationship in your family, talk about what honor looks like there.

- Clarify expectations.

DAY 6–7 — Practice family honor — Write or say one thing you appreciate about each other.

- Practice saying thank you sincerely.
- Pray together for a heart that honors others.

## **SPACE FOR YOUR REFLECTIONS AND COMMITMENTS**

What God showed me in this chapter:

My biggest blind spot in this area:

My specific commitment for this week:

Who will hold me accountable?

## **MY PRAYER AS A FATHER/MOTHER**

Father, teach me to honor, because I can only teach what I am willing to live. Forgive me for the times I have spoken poorly of authority in front of my children, and for the times I have modeled bitterness instead of honor. Give me courage to honor those who do not deserve it, because You honored me when I did not

deserve it. Help me teach my children the difference between obedience that ends and honor that remains. Give me patience, because this fruit takes time. Let my children learn that honor is not first about the worthiness of the other person, but about the kind of person they are becoming. In Jesus' name, amen.

### **VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK**

Exodus 20:12

Ephesians 6:1–3

Leviticus 19:32

## CHAPTER 5

### TEACH THEM TO WORK AND TO VALUE WHAT THEY HAVE

#### CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter begins with hard memories from El Salvador. At ten years old the author helped sell household items. At twelve he went door to door selling irons in poor neighborhoods. He learned rejection, endurance, and hard work out of necessity. If he did not sell, he did not eat.

He also washed his own clothes, ironed his uniform, and cared for himself because his grandmother worked all day. He did not learn a work ethic from pretty principles; he learned it through survival. That marked him deeply.

After arriving in the United States, he worked difficult jobs—cleaning train stations at four in the morning, painting houses, working in a recycling plant in extreme heat. Each job taught him endurance. Later, when he lost a teaching position, his children watched him apply, interview, and keep moving forward.

The chapter confronts the modern lie: “If I love my children, I should make life easy for them.” That often produces fragile adults. Chores are not punishment; they are training. Excellence is not perfectionism. It is faithfulness with what has been entrusted to you.

It also addresses money. Children need to connect work, value, and reward. They need to fail sometimes, make poor financial choices, and learn from consequences.

#### PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Take 10–15 minutes in silence to answer these questions honestly.

69. What did your parents teach you about work? How does that shape the way you teach your children?
70. Do you tend to rescue your children rather than let them experience consequences?
71. In your home, do chores feel like punishment or training?
72. Are your children seeing in you a model of excellence and perseverance, or mainly complaining and half-hearted work?
73. Are your children learning the value of money, or do they think it simply appears?
74. Have you let your children fail financially and learn from it, or do you always rescue them?

#### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LEADER'S NOTE: These questions are meant to create honest conversation, not polished answers.

75. What is the difference between teaching work from fear and teaching work from purpose?
76. When have you rescued a child in a way that may have weakened them?
77. How does your language around chores shape your children's view of responsibility?
78. How do you know when you are pushing your own dream rather than pastoring your child's growth?
79. What system for chores, allowance, and extra pay has or has not worked in your home?

#### 7-DAY CHALLENGE

For one week, train your children in work and value in visible ways.

DAY 1 — Evaluate your current system — List each child's responsibilities.

- Are they learning work, ownership, and follow-through?

DAY 2 — Have the work conversation — Explain that everyone in the house works because everyone belongs.

- Set basic responsibilities and optional extra tasks.

DAY 3 — Train excellence — Choose one simple job and teach them how to finish it well.

- Do not settle for half-finished work.

DAY 4 — Model work with joy — Let your children watch you work and hear why it matters.

- “I’m doing this because I care for what God gave us.”

DAY 5 — Practice not rescuing — When a child asks you to do something he or she can do, say, “I’ll help you, but you will do it.”

- Stay nearby, but let them finish it.

DAY 6–7 — Family work project and money talk — Do one shared project and then talk about money in age-appropriate ways.

- Show the connection between work, value, and provision.

## **SPACE FOR YOUR REFLECTIONS AND COMMITMENTS**

What God showed me in this chapter:

My biggest blind spot in this area:

My specific commitment for this week:

Who will hold me accountable?

## **MY PRAYER AS A FATHER/MOTHER**

Father, help me teach my children that work is dignity, not punishment. Forgive me for the times I have rescued them when I should have let them learn, and for the times I have modeled complaint instead of excellence. Give me wisdom to know when to step in and when to let them struggle. Give me patience to

train instead of merely demand. Help me model joyful work, humble excellence, and steady perseverance. Let my children learn to value what they receive, to work faithfully, and to get up again after they fail. In Jesus' name, amen.

### **VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK**

Colossians 3:23

2 Thessalonians 3:10

Proverbs 14:23

## CHAPTER 6

TEACH THEM TO RESIST PRESSURE (And to Be Light Without Compromising Their Faith)

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

The author grew up in 1990s El Salvador surrounded by gangs. The pressure was not merely social; it was existential. The gang offered identity, respect, and protection at the cost of the soul. God rescued him in time and gave him convictions, a new identity, and the strength to stand.

He contrasts that visible pressure with the invisible pressure children face now: algorithms, social media, instant gratification, constant comparison, and fear of missing out. Much of today's pressure does not feel like pressure to them. It feels normal.

The chapter describes three invisible forces: screens that train children to need constant stimulation, algorithmic comparison that makes them feel inadequate, and the urgency of always needing to stay current.

It also addresses peer pressure, intellectual pressure, and the pressure to remain silent about faith in academic or social spaces. Rules alone are not enough. Children need convictions that are tied to identity and relationship with God.

The goal is not to raise children in a bubble. The goal is to form children with roots, so that when pressure comes, they have something stronger than the crowd to stand on.

### PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Take 10–15 minutes in silence to answer these questions honestly.

80. Which of the three invisible pressures is affecting your children most right now: screens, comparison, or the need to stay current?
81. What rules do your children follow without understanding why? How could one of those become a conviction?
82. Do you yourself feel some of these same pressures as an adult?
83. Have you practiced “what would you do if...” conversations with your children? If not, why not?
84. What conversation or limit have you avoided because you did not want to seem like the “bad parent”?
85. Do you know the friends and influences that are shaping your children's hearts?

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LEADER'S NOTE: These questions are meant to create honest conversation, not polished answers.

86. Which invisible pressure is most active in your home right now?
87. What house rules need to become heart-level convictions?
88. When have you seen a child give in to pressure in order to fit in?
89. What real-life scenario should you rehearse with your children before it happens?
90. Would you rather be liked by your child today, or honored tomorrow? What does that question expose in you?

### 7-DAY CHALLENGE

Use the 3-3-1 plan to help each child prepare for pressure.

DAY 1–2 — Name three convictions — Write three things your child does not negotiate.

- Examples: “I do not lie to fit in.” “I do not join what steals my peace.” “I belong to Christ.”

DAY 3–4 — Name three limits — Clarify what your child avoids on purpose.

- Accounts, places, habits, or friendships that weaken the heart.

DAY 5 — Name one safe person — Make sure your child knows whom to call when pressure rises.

- It may be you. It may also be another trusted adult.

DAY 6 — Rehearse real scenarios — Practice short phrases your child can actually say.

- “No, thank you.” “That’s not for me.” “I’ve chosen another path.”

DAY 7 — Pray and review — Pray with your child and review the convictions aloud.

- Ask God for clean courage and deep roots.

## **SPACE FOR YOUR REFLECTIONS AND COMMITMENTS**

What God showed me in this chapter:

My biggest blind spot in this area:

My specific commitment for this week:

Who will hold me accountable?

## **MY PRAYER AS A FATHER/MOTHER**

Lord, You know the pressures our children face every day—some we can see, many we cannot. Give each of them a heart with structure. Let their identity be so rooted in You that the world’s voices cannot move them easily. Give us courage as parents to be unpopular when faithfulness requires it. Teach our children to resist not with fear, but with conviction. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## **VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK**

1 Peter 5:8–9

Isaiah 41:10



## CHAPTER 7

TEACH THEM ABOUT LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS (Before the World Does)

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter deals with one of the most uncomfortable but necessary conversations every father must have with his children: love, relationships, purity, sexual integrity, and protection.

Through three personal relationship stories—an impulsive relationship that led him to leave his country, a marriage with Erika built on solid foundations, and empty relationships after loss—the author shows that not every intense feeling is love, and not every relationship that feels urgent is healthy.

The chapter names topics many parents avoid: pornography, sexual pressure, unhealthy relationships, emotional dependency, abuse, and body safety. It argues that silence is not neutral. When fathers say nothing, the culture becomes the teacher.

The central truth is that a father's voice does not need to be perfect, but it must be present. Children need guidance before the world teaches them distorted versions of love.

It also stresses body safety for young children: your body is yours, there are no bad secrets you have to keep, and if something happens, I will believe you and protect you.

### PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Take 10–15 minutes in silence to answer these questions honestly.

91. What conversation about relationships, sexuality, or body safety have you most avoided with your children?
92. What from your own relationship history could become wisdom for your children if you were honest about it?
93. Have you clearly taught body safety, internet safety, and sexual integrity in age-appropriate ways?
94. Have you seen warning signs of unhealthy relationships or influences around your children?
95. If you are not teaching your children about love and sexuality, where are they learning it from?
96. What fear most keeps you from having these conversations?

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LEADER'S NOTE: These questions are meant to create honest conversation, not polished answers.

97. What silence in this area have you mistaken for protection?
98. How has your own relationship history shaped what you do or do not say?
99. Have you clearly taught young children about body safety and safe disclosure?
100. Have you talked directly about pornography, especially with sons and teens? If not, why not?
101. What conversation do you need to begin this week—even if it feels awkward?

### 7-DAY CHALLENGE

Do not try to have every conversation in one day. Start the one that matters most right now.

DAY 1 — Name the avoided conversation — Write down the one topic you have been avoiding.

- Relationships, porn, dating, body safety, digital boundaries, etc.

DAY 2–3 — Start age-appropriate dialogue — With young children, talk about body safety. With older children, talk about love, attraction, and boundaries.

- Use clear, calm language.
- Ask questions instead of launching into speeches.

DAY 4–5 — Build one practical safeguard — Put one real protection in place.

- Parental filters, accountability, device rules, privacy boundaries, or a trusted-adult plan.

DAY 6 — Tell one truthful story — Share one age-appropriate lesson from your own life.

- Not to glorify the past, but to offer wisdom.

DAY 7 — Pray over their future relationships — Speak blessing, protection, and clarity over your children.

- Ask God to guard their hearts and teach them what real love is.

## **SPACE FOR YOUR REFLECTIONS AND COMMITMENTS**

What God showed me in this chapter:

My biggest blind spot in this area:

My specific commitment for this week:

Who will hold me accountable?

## **MY PRAYER AS A FATHER/MOTHER**

Father, give me courage to speak where I have been silent. Help me teach my children about love, relationships, purity, and safety with both truth and tenderness. Keep me from awkward silence on the one hand and harsh fear on the other. Let my voice be clear, loving, and present. Protect my children from distorted versions of love and from voices that would form them without You. Teach them to guard their hearts, honor their bodies, and recognize relationships that lead them toward You rather than away from You. In Jesus' name, amen.

## **VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK**

Proverbs 4:23

1 Corinthians 6:18–20

2 Timothy 2:22

## CHAPTER 8

TEACH THEM TO SERVE AND TO GIVE (The Antidote to Narcissism)

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter confronts the cultural poison of narcissism: selfies, likes, and algorithms constantly whispering, “You, you, you.” In contrast, service and generosity become an antidote—a way of life that frees children from being trapped inside themselves.

Through personal examples—from watching Erika serve tirelessly in children’s ministry to correcting Lucas when he wanted to donate a broken toy—the chapter teaches that generosity is not getting rid of what you no longer want. It is learning to give with love and value.

It also warns against the opposite extreme. Service without limits can become destructive. Some people serve to escape, to prove themselves, or to avoid basic responsibilities at home. Healthy service includes wise limits and remembers that family is also ministry.

The chapter presents three spheres of service every child should learn: serving at home, serving in the church, and serving the world around them.

The central truth is that the most miserable young people are often the ones focused only on themselves, while the happiest discover something greater than themselves. Service does not only bless others—it reshapes the heart of the one who serves.

### PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Take 10–15 minutes in silence to answer these questions honestly.

102. What example of service and generosity are your children seeing in you right now?
103. Are your children learning to give their best, or only to give what they no longer want?
104. How balanced is service in your family across home, church, and the wider world?
105. Are you or your children showing signs of unhealthy service—serving without limits, out of guilt, or at the expense of what God has already entrusted to you?
106. Are your children growing up believing the world exists to serve them, or learning to live for something larger than themselves?
107. What is the biggest obstacle keeping you from practicing service this week?

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LEADER’S NOTE: These questions are meant to create honest conversation, not polished answers.

108. If your children had to describe your attitude toward serving others, what would they say?
109. How do you teach children the difference between giving leftovers and giving something that costs them something?
110. Where is the line between healthy service and destructive overextension?
111. In which of the three spheres—home, church, world—are your children strongest? Weakest?
112. What specific act of service can your family do this week?

### 7-DAY CHALLENGE

Spend seven days intentionally practicing service and generosity as a family.

DAY 1 — Look in the mirror — Ask what example of service your children are seeing in you.

- Name one area where selfishness or busyness is winning.

DAY 2 — Identify one need — As a family, notice one need at home, church, or in the community.

- Keep it practical and specific.

DAY 3 — Plan one response — Decide exactly what you will do.

- Who will do it? When? What will you give?

DAY 4–5 — Serve together — Carry out the plan.

- Do not make it performative.
- Include your children in the doing.

DAY 6 — Talk about generosity — Ask whether you gave your best or your leftovers.

- Use Lucas's broken-toy lesson as a guide.

DAY 7 — Process the experience — Talk about what you learned and pray together.

- What did this reveal about our hearts?

## **SPACE FOR YOUR REFLECTIONS AND COMMITMENTS**

What God showed me in this chapter:

My biggest blind spot in this area:

My specific commitment for this week:

Who will hold me accountable?

## **MY PRAYER AS A FATHER/MOTHER**

Father, rescue us from selfishness. Teach our family to serve and to give with joy, wisdom, and sincerity. Let my children see in me a life that makes room for others. Guard us from shallow generosity that only gives leftovers, and also from unhealthy service that ignores the responsibilities You have already given us. Teach

us to serve at home, in the church, and in the world around us. Free my children from the prison of self and show them the joy of living for something larger than themselves. In Jesus' name, amen.

### **VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK**

Mark 10:45

Acts 20:35

Philippians 2:3–4

## CHAPTER 9

TEACH THEM TO GET BACK UP (Because They Will Fall)

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter tells one of the most painful parenting crises in the book: discovering, just before Christmas 2025, that Kevin had been dismissed from Texas A&M after failing multiple classes. For months he had hidden the truth out of shame and fear while immersing himself in college ministry and social life.

The father found himself caught between three responses: harsh discipline, instant rescue, or something in between that he could not yet define. Trust had been broken. But Kevin's genuine persistence made the difference. He did not ask to be rescued from every consequence. He asked for help getting back up.

The chapter dismantles three destructive lies about failure: if you fail, you are a failure; failure means God abandoned you; and failure must be hidden. Against those lies stands Proverbs 24:16—the righteous person is not the one who never falls, but the one who rises again.

It also lays out a pastoral response to a child's failure: listen fully, separate identity from action, name consequences honestly, and create a path of restoration.

The great lesson is this: your job is not to keep your children from ever failing. Your job is to teach them how to repent, recover, and rise.

### PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Take 10–15 minutes in silence to answer these questions honestly.

113. What warning signs in your children might you be minimizing because you are afraid of what you might find?
114. If you asked your children, “Do you feel safe telling me when you mess up?” what do you think they would say?
115. When your children fail, do you lean more toward harsh discipline or immediate rescue?
116. When your children fail, are you responding from your wound—your fear, shame, and disappointment—or from love?
117. Which of the three lies about failure have you believed yourself? Which ones are shaping your children?
118. Is there a failure from your own life that could become a lesson for your children if you shared it honestly?

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LEADER'S NOTE: These questions are meant to create honest conversation, not polished answers.

119. Have you ever suspected something was wrong with a child but avoided asking hard questions?
120. What makes children hide their failures from parents?
121. How do you walk the line between discipline and restoration?
122. How have your own past failures shaped the way you respond to your children now?
123. What conversation or practice could make your home a safer place for confession this week?

### 7-DAY CHALLENGE

Use this week to create a home where failure can be confessed and processed honestly.

DAY 1 — Notice the signals — Pay attention to anything you may be minimizing.

- Changes in mood, evasiveness, hiding, isolation, sudden defensiveness.

DAY 2 — Prepare the conversation — Ask one child a clear and calm question about how he or she is doing.

- Lead with love, not accusation.

DAY 3 — Practice safety — Say aloud: “You can tell me when you fail. I want the truth more than a polished image.”

- Repeat this sincerely.

DAY 4 — Share one story — Tell one age-appropriate story from your own failures.

- Model that failure is not the end.

DAY 5 — Ask the hard question — Choose one issue you have been avoiding and bring it into the light.

- Be calm. Be clear.

DAY 6 — Build a restoration path — If a real issue surfaces, name consequences and also name the way forward.

- Do not leave your child only with shame.

DAY 7 — Pray together — Pray with your child, not only for your child.

- Ask God to use failure for formation, not destruction.

## **SPACE FOR YOUR REFLECTIONS AND COMMITMENTS**

What God showed me in this chapter:

My biggest blind spot in this area:

My specific commitment for this week:

Who will hold me accountable?

## **MY PRAYER AS A FATHER/MOTHER**

Father, when my children fail, help me respond with both truth and mercy. Keep me from crushing them in anger and from rescuing them in ways that keep them weak. Teach me to listen well, to separate who they are from what they have done, and to name consequences without taking away hope. Make my home a place where confession is possible, where failure is brought into the light, and where restoration has a path. Use even my children's falls to form humility, honesty, and courage. In Jesus' name, amen.

## **VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK**

Proverbs 24:16

Psalm 37:23–24

Galatians 6:1

## CHAPTER 10

TEACH THEM TO KNOW THE FATHER (And to See Him in You)

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

This final chapter reveals the heart of the book. At the deepest level, fatherhood is not mainly about techniques or methods. It is about the image of God being formed in the hearts of our children through life with us.

The author grew up with a father-shaped emptiness that distorted even his ability to pray “Our Father” after coming to Christ. Over time he realized that children often receive their earliest emotional understanding of God’s fatherhood through the presence or absence, tenderness or harshness, attention or distance of the father they know on earth.

The chapter explores six attributes of God that earthly fathers are called to reflect in imperfect ways: holy yet accessible, just yet merciful, powerful yet patient, all-knowing yet listening, unchanging yet deeply personal, and transcendent yet near.

It argues that children do not need a perfect father. They need a present one—one who welcomes honesty, names truth, listens well, disciplines with restoration in view, and remains near when it would be easier to withdraw.

The chapter ends by turning toward the children themselves and asking the defining question of the whole book: Will my children know something true about the heavenly Father because they knew me?

### PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Take 10–15 minutes in silence to answer these questions honestly.

124. How did your relationship with your earthly father shape the way you imagine God as Father?
125. Of the attributes in this chapter, which do your children probably experience well through you, and which ones are weak or distorted?
126. If you had to write a letter to each of your children today, what would you need to affirm, confess, or bless?
127. What stage is the window of opportunity currently in with each of your children: wide open, narrowing, or nearly closed?
128. Of the ten principles in the book, which one do you most urgently need to apply this week?
129. What concrete decision are you making today as you finish this guide?

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LEADER’S NOTE: These questions are meant to create honest conversation, not polished answers.

130. How has your own story with your father shaped your fathering now?
131. If your children described you using the language of God’s attributes, what would they say?
132. Which truth from the whole book is converging most strongly for you right now?
133. What would you say if you wrote each of your children a letter this week?
134. What needs to change in the next 48 hours if this book is not going to remain only a good idea?

### 7-DAY CHALLENGE

Use the final week to gather the whole journey of the book into concrete action.

DAY 1 — Review the whole book — Write the one principle you need most right now.

- Prayer, presence, identity, honor, work, resistance, relationships, service, failure, or reflecting the Father.

DAY 2 — Write one letter — Write a short letter to one child.

- Affirm, confess, bless, and tell the truth.

DAY 3 — Ask one hard question — Ask yourself what picture of God your child may be receiving through you.

- Be specific.

DAY 4 — Practice presence — Put your phone away and give one child your undivided attention.

- No fixing. Just nearness.

DAY 5 — Name a needed apology — If there is something you need to confess to a child, prepare to do it.

- Do not wait for a perfect moment.

DAY 6 — Pray as a father — Pray over each child by name.

- Ask God to make Himself known to them.

DAY 7 — Decide and begin — Name one change you will carry forward beyond this week.

- Write it down and tell someone.

## **SPACE FOR YOUR REFLECTIONS AND COMMITMENTS**

What God showed me in this chapter:

My biggest blind spot in this area:

My specific commitment for this week:

Who will hold me accountable?

## **MY PRAYER AS A FATHER/MOTHER**

Heavenly Father, heal what is distorted in me. Where my own wounds have shaped how I see You, bring truth and tenderness. Teach me to reflect Your heart to my children in the ways that matter most. Make me accessible without losing truth, merciful without losing justice, patient without becoming passive, and present without becoming self-reliant. Let my children know something true about You because they knew me—not because I was perfect, but because by Your grace I stayed, listened, welcomed, corrected, and kept coming back. In Jesus' name, amen.

## **VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK**

Psalm 103:13

Romans 8:15

John 14:9

