

Parents, we intend for this booklet to be an encouragement and help as you endeavor to lead your kids to love Jesus. All the answers to parenting woes are not contained here. However, our hope is that this booklet would produce conversations between parents, and a general framework to help guide you to a greater understanding of your role in your child's life.

Parents are the primary faith leaders

The toddler years can be challenging. Potty training, discipline, bedtime, and choosing a school can be enough to drive parents crazy. As children's minds are awakening to the world around them, it is vital that parents lead them to love Jesus. Fathers have the responsibility to intentionally lead as the spiritual leader in the home. The men of Highview are available to step up and help lead in the absence of a father figure.

A primary faith leader is a parent who takes the lead role in discipling their children. The church body should be seen as an ally, encourager, and equipper to parents. Parenting was not meant to be accomplished on an island. Other parents in the church can hold one another accountable and provide wisdom in the challenging journey of parenting.

We also recognize that families can look different. Grandparents, uncles, aunts, foster parents, and family friends may be the ones who have primary oversight of young people. We want to come alongside every family and provide the help they need in leading young people to love Jesus.

Look for teachable moments

Parents should look for moments in life to help teach the gospel to children. Current events, successes, failures, births, deaths, and major life changes can all serve as opportunities to talk to kids about faith. This can be especially frustrating at this age, because the majority of the information given does not seem to stick. When moments do arise that place a pause on the heart of your small child, it is important to take the moment to implant God's truth in their heart.

Consider this example from a Highview member:

Our child attends a public elementary school. During every Christian season, the children at school learn about how different families celebrate Christmas. Indian, Muslim, Jewish, and Christian families are represented in our daughter's class. When our daughter arrives home and talks about Diwali or Hanukah, we choose not to become angry but rather use these times to talk about how we must be thoughtful and bold to share our faith with others around us.

Practice family faith talks

A Family Faith Talk is a home gathering where the father develops a worship time that is engaging, educational, and profitable for the household. This time may include reading the Bible, praying, singing, sharing teachable moments, and encouraging one another. It may be difficult at this age to even "talk" them into eating their cheerios, much less sitting still and reading Scripture or singing. However, as parents consistently make that a part of their child's day and show their own excitement in doing so, a child's heart will indeed mold towards that desire as well.

In families without a father in the home, another parent or guardian should take the lead on Family Faith Talks.

Music can be a key part of your family time together. For families with little kids, these are some good albums:

To Be Like Jesus by Sovereign Grace Music
Super Strong God by Hillsong Kids
Jesus Came to Save Sinners – EP by The Village Kids

Parents on the same page. Not against each other.

“You said you were going to pick her up!” “I thought you were suppose to grab the diapers!” These might sound like statements you’ve made during the newborn and toddler years. Communication is important and it is important that parents be on the same page. These common mishaps are not nearly as important as being on the same page about those issues that will shape a child’s heart and character. Discipline, punishment, school, and friends are all things that parents should discuss before the issue is at hand. Agree together through prayer and discernment what your family will look like; that way you have a unified front for your child to witness and grow up with.

Children can be sly. If they realize that they can get different answers from each parent, they’ll develop a strategy for getting what they want. Each parent should affirm their spouse’s decisions and present a unified front to their children. Take the following scenario as an example:

Lilly, a beautiful little 3-year-old girl skips up to her father and asks, “Daddy can we get a dog?” Mike, her father, knows well that his wife has stated firmly that she has enough work to do without having a little puppy to keep up with. Mike has a decision. Does he put the blame on mom and pit her as the enemy? Or does he affirm the wishes of his wife and present a unified front? A more wise answer is, “Darling, your mother and I have discussed it and we think it’s not the best time to get a dog.”

You could insert many different questions into Lilly’s inquiry. Can a friend come over? Can we go out to eat? Can I get my ears pierced? It’s important that parents communicate and show their children that they are indeed a union and that they make decisions together.

Discipline

Sin is evident in the life of a child from a young age. All the “no I won’t” answers and whining have begun. A recent Highview family told this story:

“Just the other day upon my arrival home, a sippy-cup came bouncing to my feet. My son Tucker, two years old, was obviously the culprit. I asked him why he had thrown the cup and he simply smiled and said, ‘soccer-ball’. I thought this odd and cleared up his misconception by informing him that this item was actually a sippy-cup. This pattern continued for a few days before I realized what was happening. Tucker is two but even now he knows he is not suppose to throw things in the house. There are certain balls he can throw all of which he called ‘soccer-ball’. I realized that even now my sweet son was deceived into thinking that as long as he calls it a soccer-ball, he can

throw whatever he wants. Say it with a smile and a laugh and perhaps mommy and daddy will believe you don't know the difference."

This perhaps is a more cunning example, of how even at this age kids are beginning to deceive, lie, and rebel against God. Parents are called in Scripture to discipline and raise their children in God's word and truth. This may look different for each family and even each child, however, there are some core components that Scripture teaches.

Clear: There must be one message, not conflicting ones that leave the child confused.

Consistent: In both training and punishment the already clear standard must be upheld, not just when it is convenient.

Controlled: Anger should not be the motivation for discipline. Parents must exercise control, purpose, and intentionality.

Repentance-Focused: The purpose of discipline and punishment is to lead your children to a repentant heart that desires not to repeat the action.

Teaches kids the gospel: Discipline should ultimately lead your child to an understanding that Christ died for the penalty of his sin and is ready to forgive him.

Build relationships with each and all of your kids. However, give each child specific attention. This allows for unique relationships to form based on each child's unique personality. For instance, if a particular child has an interest in a particular activity it is important to cultivate that by participating or taking interest in it yourself. This may from time to time produce situations which seem unfair to other siblings. That is not always avoidable and should be embraced by also building a sense of family unity. We are to rejoice with one another in our victories and mourn with one another in our losses. This does not change within the family. This standard will create that family unity and ultimately provide a foundation for fun, confession, seeking wisdom, etc.

Method of Discipline

Proverbs 23:13-14 shows that a father that loves his children will discipline them with the rod. There is a lot of debate over whether spanking is legitimate and useful in training your children. Scripture, however, silences that debate. Discipline is an act of love in influencing children to love Jesus and submit to His authorities. Spanking is a painful experience, but the author of Hebrews notes, "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:11). When children are trained through firm discipline, it develops a teachable spirit.

Tedd Tripp, author of *Shepherding a Child's Heart* offers answers to some commonly asked questions on spanking:

What is a spanking issue?

The big question is, "Was the action clearly communicated against, and did the child act in defiance to that command?" Many parents choose to discipline for the 3 d's – disobedience, disrespect, and dishonesty.

When is my child old enough?

This could be different with each child, however, when the child is old enough to understand they have disobeyed. Spanking should render the child amiable and ready to listen.

When is a child too old?

Parents should use discernment as to when spanking is no longer a process helpful for repentance. If children are too old, spanking can become a humiliating and estranging act between a parent and child. As children get older, parents should think about revoking privileges and exercise more intentionality in the discussion of a punishment.

Can I use time-out instead of spanking?

Other methods should be used depending on the circumstances in addition to spanking or in momentary replacement of spanking, but not altogether.

What if my child says, "But, I didn't hear you?"

Is that a habitual answer? Either:

- A) They honestly have a hearing problem.
- B) They have a lying problem.
- C) They honestly didn't hear you.

Things to keep in mind

- 1) Remember your context - Baby crying, tv on, parent talking on the phone. It's very plausible for them to "hear" you but not to have truly understood the command.
- 2) Eye contact removes a lot of doubt - Take the time to create a habit of eye contact whenever a discipline issue is discussed. Make sure they hear you and understand. If that is the norm then it will be easy to determine when the "I didn't hear you" is a lie.

What if I'm too mad?

Scripture is clear that we are not to spank in anger. Have the child wait until you can regain composure. Only after you can discipline in love, should you spank. It's helpful to send the child to another room for focused time and attention.

What if we're not at home?

Spanking is intended to be a private three way event between child, parent, and the Lord. If the issues are important enough to settle immediately, then you can remove yourself from the public setting and go home.

What if I know my child is lying to me?

Discipline the lie foremost, and then address the other issues at hand. It is important to teach the child that honesty is more important than whether or not they did something wrong.

What if I'm not sure what happened?

Important first steps:

- 1) Read the room - has your child been accused of something by another? Is he or she in the proximity of the "event"?
- 2) Read your child - Ask them about what happened. If they admit their guilt, discipline accordingly. If they deny it, remember, you know your child best. All things considered, give your child the benefit of the doubt. If they develop a pattern of lying, you will be able to determine that by talking with them.

What if nothing works?

Here are a few reasons why spanking fails.

- 1) Spanking in anger. The child will not willingly submit to an angry, out-of-control parent. They understand justice and will inwardly resist such submission.
- 2) Inconsistency. If the child is unsure of whether or not he will receive a spanking, more than likely he will test the waters.
- 3) Failure to persist. Children, more than likely, will not transform even a single action after one disciplinary moment. Giving up on the rod, will only embitter the child.
- 4) Failure to be effective. The child must actually feel the rod. Double layered underwear and pants on an ever moving child is not going to convey that they were even spanked, much less why.

How do I choose a schooling option for my child?

There are four basic education options for children:

Public School

Believers who choose public schooling for their children's education point to several reasons why this is a positive choice for their child and their family.

- 1) Public schooling does indeed offer an education which stands against even private school standards. Statistics on graduation percentages and testing scores are skewed because of the vast difference in demographics within public schools as opposed to private schools. However, the education is much the same in quality.
- 2) Opportunity to shine the light of Christ in a dark place.
- 3) There is no additional financial strain on families because of tuition costs.

Christian (open-admission private) School

The difference of an "open-admission" Christian school as opposed to a contractual Christian school is that of impact. Open-admission schools attest that by allowing non-believers admission into their school, they are not only educating children of believers but also integrating a Christian impact into the community. Here are a couple of the major points of consideration.

- 1) Christian based education. Teachers are held to a standard of teaching through the eyes of faith.
- 2) All students (regardless of their religious affiliation) are confronted with a Christian worldview.
- 3) Admission, while open, is rigid, in order to protect the integrity of the school.

Christian (contractual) School

As stated, the primary difference in a contractual school and open-admission school, is admission. Contractual schools are named in this manner because they are purposed to be contracting with parents in the education of their child from a Christian worldview. This is reserved for children coming from Christian homes. Major advantages are:

- 1) Christian based education. Teachers are held to a standard of teaching through the eyes of faith.
- 2) Curriculum is specifically designed to secure a biblical worldview in every area of intellect.
- 3) Contained exposure. Students are exposed to other viewpoints as an avenue for sharpening of their minds and revealing the ultimate truth in God's word.

Homeschooling

Advocates for homeschooling begin with one basic principle. It is the parents' primary responsibility to disciple their children. Contained within discipleship is education. Therefore education will be done most successfully at home with the parents at the helm of education. A few positive attributes are:

- 1) Hands on attention and parental oversight on the specifics of what your child is learning. You are ensured the control over study environment for your child as well as curriculum choices.
- 2) High standard of faith based application – If you are disciplined in teaching your child through a biblical worldview, homeschooling offers easy access to accomplish that goal.
- 3) This is typically a less expensive alternative to private education.

Highview members' responses regarding their educational choice

Public School – Highview members Scott and Kimber Graves

After much prayer, consideration, and research, we chose public education for our children, believing it to be the most feasible choice based upon our family's circumstances. As we explored school options, a number of factors surprised us about our local public school district:

- **Christian staff** - a significant number of believers teach in the elementary, middle, and high schools
- **Safety** - the schools are safe and within 5 miles of our home
- **Positive atmosphere** – all 3 children enjoy school and our involvement has always been encouraged and welcomed

Regardless of which school choice a family makes, we believe all Christians are homeschoolers, charged with the responsibility of imparting to our children the very truth of who God is (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). For us, active involvement and awareness, proactive advocacy, and intentional home training in a biblical worldview have proven to make public education a viable choice.

Private/Christian School - Highview members Tim and Leigh Jarm

The private/Christian School option offers families an alternative to the public school system and provides an atmosphere that is dedicated to the spiritual as well as intellectual, social and physical development of its students. Because a private, Christian school is funded through tuition payments and fundraising efforts, not public taxes, the school is able to offer a Christ-centered environment that emphasizes a biblical worldview in all aspects of the educational experience. We support the Christian school experience because our children have benefited from being taught by Christian teachers, being encouraged to pray daily in class, participating in weekly worship services, developing relationships with Christ-like role models as coaches and teachers, and having opportunities to live out their faith inside as well as outside the classroom. We have felt as though the school has truly partnered with us as we train up our children in the Lord.

Homeschool – Highview members Lange and Jamie Patrick

As we prayed through school options for our children, the Lord continually pressed homeschooling as the best option for them at this season of life. We have great opportunity each day to spend time educating our children. We are able to develop our own comprehensive plan for educating our children that is distinctly Christian in nature. We reevaluate each year the decision to best educate them not only in math, science, and reading but also in Bible, worldview, and theology. We do not believe that homeschooling is the only credible option for Christian families. We do firmly believe that it is the best option for our family at this time.