

COVENANT EFC



PARENTING

FROM INSIDE OUT

**Towards an
Intentional Disciple
Making Family (IDMF)**

MEMBER'S WORKBOOK

PARENTING

FROM INSIDE OUT

TOWARDS AN INTENTIONAL DISCIPLE MAKING FAMILY (IDMF)

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TOWARDS AN INTENTIONAL
DISCIPLE MAKING FAMILY (IDMF)
Member's Workbook**

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FOREWORD BY SENIOR PASTORS

Dear Parents,

This parenting material is meant for your own growth journey, and possibly for journeying with others who are also in a season of discipling at home. Although there are no perfect parents or foolproof parenting method, the Bible gives us clear principles on how to teach and train our children in the way of the Lord. It is a redemptive discipleship journey and we need to practice patience and grace in raising our children — in the same way that our Heavenly Father has been gracious to us (Rom 5:8; Psa 103:8-12).

Parenting from Inside Out Towards an Intentional Disciple Making Family (IDMF) is based on the spiritual anchor of Covenant EFC found in Acts 20:28. We embrace growth from inside out as we emphasise the importance of discipleship at home. Thus, we need to pay attention to three specific areas:

- **Our Relationship with God**

We need to grow deeper in our relationship with God.

- **Our Relationship with Self**

We need to take care of ourselves and develop self-awareness.

- **Our Relationship with Others**

We need to strengthen our relationships with our spouse and children.

We recommend that this material be used in sequential order as the lessons are arranged following a “from-inside-out” format. It is best to go through this module in a small group to foster support within a like-minded community. Each lesson can also be used as a stand-alone material. The questions in each lesson are for both discussion and self-reflection.

As we journey together towards IDMF, may we experience God’s redemptive work in our lives and in our families!

Rev Tony Yeo & Rev Tan Kay Kiong

**“WE EMBRACE
GROWTH FROM
INSIDE OUT AS
WE EMPHASISE
THE IMPORTANCE
OF DISCIPLESHIP
AT HOME.”**

GROUND RULES

To ensure that this Parenting Group is a safe place to learn, it is important for the group members to agree on the following ground rules:

1. I agree to respect the time of others by being punctual.
2. I agree to keep everything shared in the group confidential.
3. I agree *not* to be abstract, but to be personal in my sharing. I agree to use “I” statements (i.e. I feel, I think, I need, etc.) when sharing my needs, attitudes, feelings and ideas.
4. I agree that it is important to process past experiences which make my parenting less effective, and to confront issues that are challenging me. I agree that some of these may need to be followed through with the help of an experienced counsellor outside the group.
5. I agree to be discreet and sensitive to others when I share.
6. I agree *not* to give unsolicited advice, and *not* to accuse or pass judgement.
7. I agree *not* to criticise my spouse and family members during the sessions.
8. I agree to be prepared to give and receive feedback.
9. I agree *not* to debate on our intellectual opinion about what should happen. We will share our opinion only in relation to our own families.
10. I commit to journey with the Parenting Group for the entire duration of the module.

Name and Signature:

Date:

PROPOSED PROGRAMME

1. Review the previous lesson by going through *Review* and *Quick Catch-Up*.
2. Leader to read *Introduction* and facilitate an icebreaker (icebreaker is optional).
3. Watch the short film (3 mins).
4. Share one take-home lesson from the short film (10 mins).
5. Watch the teaching video (10 mins).
6. Divide into discussion groups (3 to 4 couples per group) so that everyone can fully participate.
7. Discuss using the questions in *Group Discussion* and *Personal Application*, emphasising on *Personal Application* (45 mins).
You may answer only those questions which are appropriate to your group's current journey. If necessary, you may extend the sessions to cover the rest of the questions.
8. Bring the Parenting Group back together for conclusion and closing. Leader to summarise the key points (5 mins).
9. Close the session by praying for one another.

(M.O.D.E.L.S.)

LESSON ONE

MODELLING
DISCIPLESHIP
AT HOME

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

By Rev Dr Chua Chung Kai and Mrs Tina Chua

1



“You may think your young people could care less about what you have to say, but current research suggests that parents have a lot more influence than they realize. Not only are they listening, but more importantly, they are watching you closely and modelling their lives after you.”

LESSON ONE

MODELLING DISCIPLESHIP AT HOME

INTRODUCTION

Parents, who do you want your child to emulate — a teacher, a famous person, a superhero or you? Research and studies show that the most influential person in a child’s life is his/her parents! According to the article *A Parent’s Influence* from Christian Broadcasting Network (www.cbn.com): “You may think your young people could care less about what you have to say, but current research suggests that parents have a lot more influence than they realize. Not only are they listening, but more importantly, they are watching you closely and modelling their lives after you. Whether you believe it or not, parents are the biggest influence in their teens’ life. Several studies point to a parent’s ability to shape their kids in lasting ways.”

■ Short Film (3 mins)

Watch *Caught!*

▶ <https://vimeopro.com/covenantefc/pfio-session-1>

■ Sharing (10 mins)

What is your one take-home lesson from the short film?

■ Teaching Video (10 mins)

Watch *Modelling Discipleship at Home*.

▶ <https://vimeo.com/covenantefc/pfio-session-1>

Points to Ponder:

“In God’s agenda, becoming precedes doing. **Surrender** is the key to that becoming.” – Rev Edmund Chan.
This emphasises the idea of **Relationship with God** — dealing with the unsundered self. This affects how we speak and behave in front of our loved ones.

■ Group Discussion (40 mins)

Divide into discussion groups (3 to 4 couples per group).

Model your walk with Jesus. Model your relationship with God.

1. Share your current journey with the Lord. Describe the state of your spiritual disciplines.

What are the areas you need to work on?

2. Is it easy for you to admit your mistake(s) to your spouse and children? Why or why not?

What is a good way to apologise to your spouse and children? (Clue: seven words used in the video)

3. When a family member apologises to you, how do you respond most of the time? What is a good way to assure them that you have accepted their apology? How do you restore and build up your relationship?

4. What are other values and disciplines to model for your children? What do you hope to see in them? Do they resonate with the character traits and moral values taught in the Bible?

■ **Personal Application (5 mins)**

5. How does modelling discipleship at home look like to you? What are the step(s) you can start doing right away? Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

■ Group Summary (5 mins)

Key Points:

1. Parents to work on surrendering their lives to the Lord (Lk 9:23).
2. Parents to practice what they are teaching their children — walk the talk (Col 3:16-17).
3. Parents to set the pace so that their children will follow (1 Cor 11:1).

■ Closing Prayer

Lord, help me set a good example to my children as I follow Your example. As I surrender myself to You, help me be the kind of disciple and parent that you want me to be. Thank You Lord!
Amen.

■ Recommended Readings

1. *Legacy Beyond Self*, Chapter 7 “Learning the Ropes”, pp.121-128, Tan Kay Kiong (Refer to Appendix 1.)
2. *The Responsibilities of Fatherhood (Deuteronomy 6:1-19)* by J Hampton Keathley III, <https://bible.org/article/responsibilities-fatherhood-deuteronomy-61-19>
3. *52 Things Kids Need from a Mom* by Angela Thomas
4. *52 Things Kids Need from a Dad* by Jay Payleitner

■ Preparation for the Next Session

1. Read the next lesson: Owning Your Parenting Journey.
2. Pray for yourself and your group.

APPENDIX 1

LEARNING THE ROPES

By Rev Tan Kay Kiong

There are many things I do not like to do. One of them is to carry a newborn baby. They look so fragile and I am so afraid of dropping them.

When I first held my newborn child in my arms, I would anxiously tell my wife to put her slowly in my arms and only let go when I have held her firmly. Thereafter I would find myself frozen in position so that she would not fall out of my arms.

As part of the bonding process, Diana would urge me to bathe our tiny baby. It was certainly harder than clearing the army obstacle course!

Then, to have to rock the baby to sleep at night was simply back-breaking and arm-aching work. That, and you were supposed to know why the baby is crying...!

I had to learn the ropes.

Watching a toddler attempt to feed herself can be an especially painful process as well. This is how we did it in our household:

Diana would spread a big mat on the floor, put the baby chair on it, secure the child, serve the food in a bowl, give her a spoon, and leave her to dig in and figure out how to feed herself on her own.

When I am tasked to supervise the operation, I can feel my impatience mounting with each passing minute. Not only does it take time for

my kid to clumsily scoop the food and try to get it into her mouth, more often than not, the food gets flung off the secured area. If I am not careful, it might even land on my face!

Meanwhile, my job is to watch over this delicate operation and cheer her on. Wouldn't it have been easier if I had simply just fed her myself and got it over with?

But no, instead, I am tasked to watch in grim horror to encourage the process.

I had to learn the ropes.

* * * * *

You have heard the saying: "Monkey see, monkey do". That means we are creatures of imitation. In parenting our kids, for example, we *learn the ropes* by repeating what our parents

have taught us. We raise our children as we have been raised, because that is how we have seen it done.

However, learning the ropes in the parenting journey requires more than just imitation. We may have learnt how to tie the knots as our parents have shown us, but oftentimes, in order to grow and mature, it may involve *untying* them instead.

Have you ever tried to free a rope entangled in knots? I am no boy scout, but everyone

**We are creatures of imitation...
We raise our children as we have
been raised, because that is how
we have seen it done.**

knows that trying to free a truly knotted up entanglement can be very frustrating. It takes a lot of time and a lot more patience. Until you untie it properly, there is no way you can use the rope as it was intended.

Likewise in the process of our parenting, until we untie the knots in the past and detangle the roots that impede our growth, we cannot possibly move very far ahead in our parenting journey.

I would like to point out three knots we must untie:

Knot #1: The Unsundered Life

Our greatest legacy to our children does not lie in what we do for them, but what we *are* to them.

If we pause and ask what our children really think of us, we might be shocked to hear their honest answers. Do they see the faith, the hope and the love of Christ in us? Or do they just see anger, anxiety and fear?

If “who we are” is critically important to our children, then it pays for us to examine the real state of our being. For at the core of it must be a posture of *surrender*. That means acknowledging that God is sovereign; He is in control; and He cares for us beyond our imagination.

If we do not untie the knot of an *unsundered life* in our hearts, how can we teach our children the joys of a surrendered life?

I would like to challenge us to consider how we try to inspire our children towards excellence. How often have you found yourself saying things like this:

“If you fail in your exams, you will not find a job and become a successful person in life.”

“If you don’t get good PSLE or ‘O’ Level results, you will be left behind.”

“If you don’t have a degree, you cannot make a good career for yourself. Then you will not be able to raise a family in Singapore.”

Think about it for a minute: How can we teach our children to believe and trust in God when this is what we say to them most of the time?

I am not undermining the need for our children to study hard and do their best. However, I am underscoring our own insecurities as parents; our own inability to trust God. *We end up projecting all our anxieties and fears on our children!*

At the end of the day, if we have not learnt how to trust God ourselves and glean from the

secrets of a rested and surrendered life, we can never teach our children how to trust God.

Knot #2: Unfinished Business

Have you ever heard this complaint from your spouse: “You are just like your father (or mother)!”

If it is a positive commendation, then it is well and good. But if it is a negative criticism, then it is reflective of the knot of *unfinished business*.

Counsellors tell us that we tend to become the person we dislike. It is strange, but it happens. For example, my father had many wonderful traits, but he was generally passive by nature. I often wished that he had been more authoritative and taken charge of things at home in times of chaos. I did not like that aspect of my father.

Ironically, I became *just like him!*

Most of us have a default style of parenting – and it surfaces even more under pressure.

There is no better “school” to surface the unfinished business of our lives than through the school of parenting. Consider the following situations that may sound familiar to you:

- *Your child does not have a double eyelid or a sharp nose:* Immediately, you are confronted by what is beautiful or ugly; which facial features you wished you had; or for some, the painful reminder that your parents thought you were ugly and preferred your sibling over you.
- *Your child does not do as well in his studies as others:* Immediately, you are confronted by what is better or more secure. You may lament your own poor performance as a student or why your child does not have your smart brain. In either case, you can become overly driven and protective to ensure he does not suffer the same fate as you; or you become overly critical and miss your child’s uniqueness in the plan of God.

I am sure you can think of many other situations in your child’s life. Your child is autistic... Your child is rebellious... Your child bites or hits someone else... Your child does not believe in God...

Each of these situations calls us not only to address the matter seriously, but also to examine the unfinished business of our lives – be it our beliefs, our values or our attitudes. It is the only way by which we have the opportunity to break the cycle of generational influences. It is not a curse but a *gift from God* to untie the knot of unfinished business.

Knot #3: Unexamined Parenting Styles

When it comes to parenting, each of us has a different parenting style*. Which are you?

- The **Authoritarian** style (where parents are drill sergeants)
- The **Permissive** Style (where parents are domestic helpers)
- The **Uninvolved** or Hands-off Style (where parents are absent)
- The **Authoritative** Style (where there is a balance between authority and love)

* *Diana Baumrind, 1967, and Maccoby & Martin, 1983*

Naturally, every parent would like to think that he or she is an authoritative parent who exercises a fair balance of love and authority. But the reality is, most of us have a default style of parenting – and it surfaces even more under pressure. We have to learn the strengths and avoid the weaknesses of each style.

In my observation, most Singaporean parents (including myself) tend to be more authoritarian because of our tradition in a patriarchal system as well as our national culture of discipline,

efficiency and regimentation. If we do not diagnose our primary styles and are unwilling to learn other styles, we will experience great difficulty along the parenting journey.

According to Dr David Olson’s research on the Circumplex model of Marital and Family Systems, the two most needed traits for successful parenting are *flexibility* and *adaptability*. That means being willing to adopt a new attitude; learn a new language; and explore a new frontier.

Every parent has to decide how to use the rod – whether to spare the rod or use it sparingly! Besides, it only works for a season after all.

That means learning from your spouse; playing different roles at different times as parents; and exercising wisdom and discretion as the situation demands or calls for it.

In my early days as a parent, I quickly realised that I was a strict, rigid disciplinarian and a no-nonsense type of guy. Everything must happen according to my timing and preference. Paired with that was my anxious and cautious personality. Can you imagine my frustration when the children did not follow my set patterns and adhere to my timetables?

At the playground, when the kids would climb and jump off the highest point, you would hear me anxiously barking, “No!” or “Stop running!” or “Quit jumping!”. But my wife was the complete opposite of me. She was open to adventure, flexible and had a spirit of “never say never”. She encouraged them to explore.

Let my children go. I had so much to learn from her while keeping my sanity in ensuring basic safety! After all, which parent would want to see their children getting hurt? Besides, I did not want the hassle of bringing them to the Accident and Emergency Department... and spending unnecessary money... and derailing them from their routines... and...

Obviously I am an anxious worrier. It is clear that this was an “unfinished business” for me. No doubt there are benefits to being cautious when trying something new, but on a day-to-day basis, life can become mundane, constricted and unexciting if we do not allow our kids to explore and venture out.

Think about it this way: What sort of

memories can we build in such an environment? Furthermore, how can we prepare our children for the chaotic world out there if all we do is prevent them from exploring and experiencing life to its fullest?

At the end of the day, it comes back to untying the knots of an unsundered heart; unfinished business; and unexamined parenting styles.

Knots We Must Tie

As I embarked on the parenting journey in 1993, how totally unprepared I was. Nothing I had gone through in life up to that point had prepared me for it. Everything seemed accidental, not intentional. We simply parented the way our parents did; we parented the way we thought was best; we parented as our peers or culture dictated.

So far, we have talked about untying knots. But there are knots we need to *learn to tie* in order to be an intentional disciplinarian parent as God intended:

1. Tying the Knot of Decision

From day one, have you decided what your child will be? When you are on your death bed, what would you wish your child to remember and live out?

This is a question of their “being”, not their “doing”. Most of us named our children so that they would imbibe the traits and character associated with that name. Sometime back, my wife and I thought that the best way to decide what our children should be was to embed it in our family name: TAN. In order for our children to remember and practice it, it would have to be

If our children do not grow up recognising there are consequences to their actions, how will they deal with the issues of drugs and sex?

easily remembered and frequently taught. This was what we came up with:

T – TRUST in God’s Goodness

That means they will learn that God is sovereignly good in all situations and at all times. If our children can learn this, they will be able to face the twists and turns of life’s demands with restedness amidst the flux of constant change.

A – ACT for God’s Glory

That means they will learn that God gets all the credit for who they are and what they achieve in life. If our children can clearly see this, they will be guarded from self-centredness and pride, as they remember to give God all the glory.

N – Never Give Up

That means that learning to trust in God’s goodness and making choices for God’s glory is a lifelong journey. It is not easy, but if our children can learn this, they will develop perseverance and tenacity, being able to press on and never giving up, while trusting that God is in control of their lives.

2. Tying the Knot of Discipline

The proverb goes: “Spare the rod and spoil the child”. Most Asian parents have no issue with this. Many of us have been used to being caned and smacked by our parents. So, when we became parents ourselves, we had several caning rods lying around (even one in the car).

I have no issue with caning, provided it is carried out under control. But in our experience,

it can sometimes go overboard when anger rages out of control. We hurt negatively more than we discipline constructively.

Thus, every parent has to decide how to use the rod – whether to spare the rod or use it sparingly! Besides, it only works for a season after all. When they are in their teens, it will no longer be useful.

In their book *Parenting with Love and Logic*, Foster Cline and Jim Fay make this simple thesis: Train the child to choose and face the consequences.

Here’s how it works: If they decide not to eat at the appointed time, they can go hungry that night. Or if they choose to watch TV instead of doing their homework, they can face their teachers the next day.

This may seem unconventional for Asian parents. We would usually

demand that our kids eat whenever we tell them (or whatever we feed them) *or else...* We would sit our children down and go through their bags and homework... We would...

To be honest, I do not think we are training them for the future if we do this. At the end, we become angry and naggy parents who are demanding rather than God’s disciplinators who are patiently training and disciplining our children in love.

If our children do not grow up recognising there are consequences to their actions, how will they deal with the issues of drugs and sex when they are older? We can only watch over them for a limited period of time. We must teach them to deal with consequences, starting with their everyday decisions, starting now.

I felt convicted that I should not just leave the disciplining of my children to the church.

Thus, since our kids were young, we did not pack their bags for school – we simply lovingly asked if they were ready to face a new day. If they said they were, then we trusted that they were. We did not check to see if they had done their homework – we simply lovingly asked if everything that needed to be done had been done, or we might ask if they needed any help with their school work, without doing it for them.

As parents, each of us has to decide how to tie this knot in parenting.

Once, one of the girls' teachers called me to lament:

“Mr Tan, your daughter did not do this. Didn't you check her work?”

I kindly replied: “My job is to train my child to be responsible and not to take over her responsibility. If my daughter did not do what was required, you are free to dole out the appropriate discipline as the teacher.”

She was stunned. She must have wondered what kind of father I was! But I can honestly tell you, we are happier parents training the children this way.

3. Tying the Knot of Discipling

As parents, we want to disciple our children. That is why we develop a routine to read Bible stories to them and pray with them. We also find teachable moments to instill godly values. We lead them in the sinner's prayer. We make sure our children go to Sunday school and attend youth meetings. We try our best to give them a strong spiritual foundation.

Once, I felt convicted that I should not just leave the discipling of my children to the church. Until then, I had never conducted any basic discipleship studies with my kids. So I took two

days off during their school holidays to bring one of my girls out and go through the Navigators' basic follow-up materials with her.

However, we did not just sit down and “do” Bible study from nine to five. (A word of warning: If you do that, that will probably be the last time they will ever want to go out with you!)

Instead, our day was interspersed with shopping, dining and Bible study. Then we spent more time shopping, eating ice-cream and then picking up the Bible study some more.

The good news was, she wanted to do it again! For a teenager to want to do that again, that is really good news. However, one daunting truth remains:

More is caught than taught. Do our children see congruence between what we teach them and what they see on a daily basis? More than just a one-off Bible study session, their observations of our lives will be the foundation for the more lasting lessons that they will pick up from us.

In my journey as a father, I have had to ask myself what kind of discipleship environment we have provided for our children so that they can know and love God.

As I considered this, I identified four characteristics that should define a family arena which is conducive to nurturing faith and discipleship:

- **Loving Authority:** “Authority” is not a dirty word.

If we do not disciple our children to respect and submit to constituted authority, how can there be any reverence for God as the highest authority then? It is important to note that this authority is not militant, but is based on love.

**Where there is conflict,
they must also see the beauty
of reconciliation in Christ.**

How many adults have trouble relating to our heavenly Father because they have never experienced the loving authority of an earthly father? If we can provide an environment where there is loving authority, it lays a solid foundation for authentic discipling to take place.

- **Living Authenticity:** How life-giving it would be if our kids could witness grace, forgiveness, servanthood and intimacy in action within their own homes!

Authenticity is not about being perfect and displaying the right behaviour all the time. Rather, it is about how broken people can become whole people because of Jesus.

You have heard the advice that if a husband and wife need to fight, do it out of the view of the children. No doubt there is wisdom

in that. Overexposure to conflict – and especially violence – can have a damaging effect on children. But we cannot always hide conflicts from the children. They know what is happening.

My personal mantra is this: If a husband and wife have to fight, then fight. But the caveat is, if the fight took place before the children, then the reconciliation must also take place before them. Conversely, if reconciliation cannot be done before the children, then fighting in their presence must also cease.

How important it is that our children know about the chaos and conflicts in relationships, for that is the reality of life. Marriage is not a fairytale where we live happily ever after, as

the fables would like us to believe. However, where there is conflict, they must also see the beauty of reconciliation in Christ. That is what it means to live authentically.

- **Reserved Availability:** We need both quantity and qualitative time with our children. They must know we have a prime slot in our calendar specially reserved for them.

On the nights when I was committed to ministry, I used to come home earlier for dinner so that while my wife was cooking, I had a short but significant time to bring the kids to the playground where they could play and I could be available to them.

On my day off (it was on Tuesdays then), we used to bring them to the zoo, the beach or the shopping centre. As it was a weekday, the places we went to were usually not crowded. Many times, we got to enjoy the children's zoo and wading pool all to ourselves.

Every quarter of the calendar, we would take a short vacation in Malaysia just to hang out and play. Hopefully our kids will remember such times when they grow up.

- **Ready Accessibility:** Years ago, I had a conversation with the wonderful Bible teacher, Alan Catchpole. He shared how he was often in his study, absorbed with reading the Bible. His son had been taught not to disturb him whenever daddy was in his study.

On one occasion, his son knocked on his door.

“Son, I am studying,” Alan said to him. “Please run on and go to your mother.”

How many adults have trouble relating to our heavenly Father because they have never experienced the loving authority of an earthly father?

But just as he said that, the Holy Spirit spoke to him: “Is that how you want your son to experience you? That you are not always accessible? Is that how you want him to think of the heavenly Father, that He is always busy?”

Rebuked, Alan called for his son and spent that short time with him. From that day forward, he determined that he would not only be available to his son, but he would also be always *accessible*.

This may sound like an ideal that is unattainable. It may seem too complicated for many of us who do not have total control over our time. But whenever it is within your power to do so, make yourself accessible to your children. Let them know you welcome their intrusion, however inconvenient it may be to you.

When I am engaged in preparing for a sermon, I would tell the receptionist not to put through any calls unless they are from my wife or my children. I want them to know I am readily accessible.

4. Tying the Knot of Dedication

As young parents, many of us have probably dedicated ourselves to be godly examples to our children. We may also have dedicated our children to the Lord at a Baby Dedication ceremony, so that they might serve God in whatever capacity He calls them to.

As we painstakingly go through the actual process of parenting – that is, deciding what our children will be; disciplining them in the path of righteousness; and discipling them in the ways of the Lord – there is no guarantee how our children will turn out.

There is only one goal that we seek to fulfill,

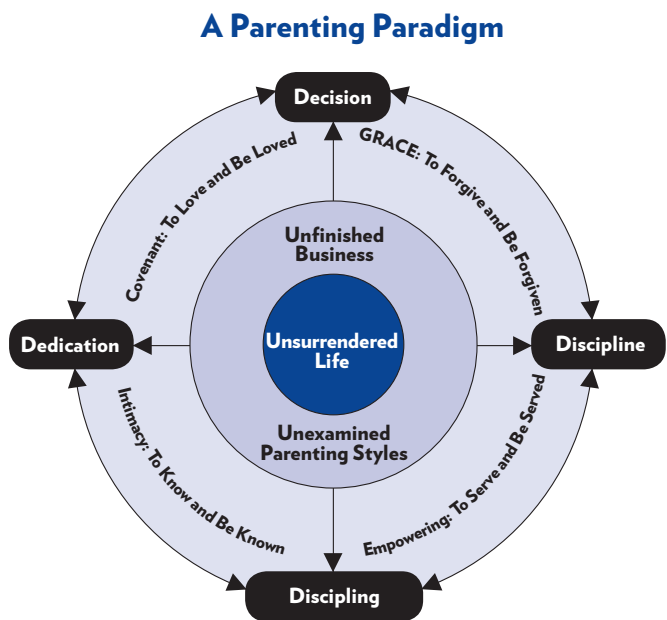
and that is to dedicate our children to the purposes of God. We have no control over their hearts and their choices. The only thing we can do is be faithful to the process.

That simple act of dedicating our babies on a Sunday morning may last less than 10 minutes, but it will take the next 10 to 20 years of hard work, desperate prayers and many humbling moments.

Actually, we do not have a lot of time. We have to learn fast and glean from the successes and mistakes of others. We have to do the best we can with the children He has blessed us with, and trust that, ultimately, God’s purposes will be attained in His way and in His time. After all, we are but mere stewards of His gifts.

Parenting Well

If I were to put all that I have said in this chapter into a picture, this is what it would look like:



This picture may seem familiar to you. This is because I had first referred to it in Chapter Six in the marriage paradigm. Notice that the four bases are the same.

The fundamental principles that anchor a successful marriage are also the same for parenting. In order for our children to feel loved and secure, they must experience these same four elements of a Covenant relationship:

- **Covenant:** To love and be loved
- **Grace:** To forgive and be forgiven
- **Empowering:** To serve and be served
- **Intimacy:** To know and be known

For successful parenting, we start by untying the knot of an **Unsurrendered Life** in the first circle. This is primarily about the parent's inner life and walk with God. When we shed our own insecurity and fears, we will release our children to the Lord. What we *are* to them will matter more than what we *do* for them.

Next, we further untie the knot of **Unfinished**

Business and **Unexamined Parenting Styles** in the second circle. This is primarily about the parent's personal issues. In resolving and reconciling our unfinished business and examining our default responses in parenting, we grow in greater self-awareness and maturity. I believe the greatest work of parenting is found here. As we walk faithfully with God and work fervently on our attitudes, we will become better persons as a result.

Once the inner walk with God is steadfast and the inner self is conquered, that is where real parenting starts in the last circle. This is where we learn to tie new knots on **Decisions, Discipline, Discipling** and **Dedication**.

May this simple paradigm guide you in learning the ropes of parenting well.