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Series introduction

Raising kids is a daunting endeavor for even the most skilled parents. The challenge is compounded by the high-tempo lives we live. Between work, school, practices, recitals, games, youth group, performances, time with friends, and the myriad of other time-suckers, parenting feels more like a logistical nightmare than the divine call to shape the lives of our children.

We have partnered with 10Publishing to produce the *Raising Kids* series. These resources have been written to bring welcome help to parents who may be feeling overwhelmed by the many challenges parenting brings. The series contains short books on vital issues parents face in today's day and age, as well as issues parents of every generation wrestle with. Issues like a self-made identity, sex, gender fluidity, our results-driven culture, grace-centered

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parenting, technology, and social media, are all covered in these books. The authors write from a deep understanding of God’s Word coupled with their own experience of raising kids, making each book rich with practical and personal wisdom that is sure to benefit any parent.

These short, easy-to-read books do not attempt to be exhaustive manuals on any one of the topics. Instead, they offer strategic insights that are both timeless and immediately applicable. The goal is not to fully outfit you for an expedition over Everest but to give you a few secure handholds and footholds that will help you hang on and advance up the mountain of raising kids.

Our children are being taught at school that they are awesome and that they can achieve anything they want if only they try hard enough. This message can seem at odds with what the Bible teaches, and the cultural tension can be confusing for our kids. In *Raising Kids in a “You Can Do It” World*, Paul Tautges explains how we can help our children see how awesome God is which in turn will help them to have a biblical self-image that leads to true and lasting humble confidence.

Curtis W. Solomon

Director, The Biblical Counseling Coalition

Is everyone awesome?

From almost every angle (movies, TV, YouTube, school) our kids are receiving the same basic message. They hear that every child is his or her own independent, self-sufficient, self-directed, self-governing person. Like a scratched vinyl record, the world expresses related mantras:

- You're awesome!
- Be who you are on the inside.
- Listen to your heart.
- You can do it!

Instead of helping kids to become confident, stable, and secure—because of humble dependency upon God and His wisdom—messages like these feed the inborn, natural elevation of self. Awareness of this cultural tension highlights how

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much we need to approach Christian parenting as intentional discipleship. Like every parent, every child is a depraved sinner whose heart naturally gravitates toward personal autonomy. Therefore (also like their parents), every kid’s greatest need is to be redeemed by the grace of God, and renewed according to the image of Jesus Christ.

So how can we help our kids think rightly about themselves and God? How can we train them to see themselves as God’s special creatures, while at the same time not lead them to believe they are the masters of their own destiny?

The purpose of this book is to answer these kinds of questions. To simplify matters for you (not that the answer or the application is simple!) I will draw a basic road map for parenting in today’s world, with eight road signs marking the landmark truths our kids need to understand. I will assume that you, the parent, are driving (or at least you want to) the car that carries your kids down this road. I trust that you want to say to them, “Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching” (Prov. 1:8).

Therefore, I want to come alongside to provide you with biblical guidance. This book is not aimed at your kids; it’s aimed at you, it’s aimed at me.

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That being said, however, at the end of the book you will find age-appropriate questions to help you learn how to convey the truths you learn.

What are the most important signs to read and follow? Fasten your seatbelt. Here we go.

SIGNPOST 1

Test your own faith

To lead our children toward a God-centered view of life we must begin at the beginning. That is, before we get too gung-ho about directing our children to follow Jesus, we should take careful inventory of our own relationship with God.

Are you saved? Have you experienced conversion? Are you seriously following Jesus as a committed disciple? Are you growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ, or are you content to possess superficial faith? Are you moving away from loving the world, or are you tiptoeing as close to the edge as you can?

In other words, what *you as a parent* believe about God, sin, and salvation—the gospel—and

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how these beliefs are lived out day by day impacts your children.

Beware of three common errors

When it comes to teaching children the gospel, there are mistakes which are often made by Christian parents. I’ll mention three.

1. Fatalism

Some parents become so enamored by the beauty of God’s sovereignty in salvation (and we *should* be enamored by His sovereign grace!) that they take a hands-off approach to evangelizing their children. “After all,” they might think, “if God plans to save my kids, then He will do it with or without me.” However, the biblical view of God’s sovereign grace never minimizes our responsibility to obey the gospel or share it with others. Therefore, what every child really needs is regular instruction from Scripture concerning God’s holy character, man’s sinful nature, and God’s provision for salvation through Jesus Christ. This instruction will naturally lead to conversations in which we may gently help our children to see their own need for the Savior, and call them to personal faith. For example, the apostle Paul writes how

Test your own faith

Timothy had “known the Holy Scriptures” from infancy because of the faithful instruction of his mother and grandmother. As a result, the Spirit used Scripture to make him “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15).

2. “Easy Decisionism”

In a sincere effort to make the gospel easy to understand, and heaven easy to attain, parents may unknowingly offer salvation as a low-priced transaction between a sinner and God: “You don’t want to go to hell when you die, do you? Then just pray this simple prayer.” Or, “Do you want to go to heaven someday? Just ask Jesus into your heart.” However, what every child really needs is to be regularly confronted by two costs: (1) the cost God paid to make salvation free for sinners, and (2) the cost of discipleship. First, remember that salvation is free for us, but it was not free for God! The price was the blood of His only Son (1 Pet. 1:19). But second, let’s also teach our children that the call of Jesus to enter the kingdom of God requires walking through the narrow gate that “leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matt. 7:14). Of course we also need to be praying that God would work in our children’s hearts to bring them

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to repentance and faith even as we faithfully teach them the gospel.

3. False Assurance

Some Christian parents, disillusioned by their child’s rebellion, worldliness, or plain lack of interest in spiritual things, fail to directly confront them with biblical truth. Instead, they assure their carnal child he or she is saved when the Bible indicates there is a possibility they’re not. Perhaps they reason, regardless of their child’s carnality, “I just know my son is saved because I was with him when he knelt by his bed, and prayed to receive Jesus.” However, what every child really needs is to be gently guided in the use of Scripture to see their own sinfulness, learn how to examine their own rebellious heart, and evaluate the presence or absence of the fruit of the Spirit in order to see if they have been deceived. James 1:22 warns believers, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves.” Christian parents must be careful not to unintentionally feed their child’s self-deception by giving them false assurance. Remember, even Jesus had a Judas.

Now, I don’t say this to cast doubt upon the genuineness of your faith. I don’t even know you!

Test your own faith

However, I do mean to make it clear that it's hypocritical for us as parents to expect our children to go further with *their* faith than we are willing to go with *ours*. So let's be honest and humble. Let's regularly examine our own lives before the mirror of the Word of God so that we do not forget the depth of our own need for Christ and His saving grace (Jas. 1:21–25).

Take a moment to reflect

In 1 Corinthians 11:27–28, the apostle Paul admonishes us to examine ourselves each time we gather to “eat of the bread and drink from the cup,” so that we do not partake in an “unworthy manner” and “be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord”. If Jesus instituted communion as an ordinance to be practiced regularly, and the apostle urges us to examine ourselves every time we partake, then surely the spiritual discipline of self-examination is reasonable and should be an ongoing practice in the Christian life. Therefore, let us also heed the apostle's later admonition: “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves” (2 Cor. 13:5).

Take some time right now to prayerfully evaluate your own spiritual life. Are you just as eager

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for God to teach you to walk in the obedience of
faith as you are to guide your children?