



Bulletin

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Fall Is Family Time

IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE BY JIM DALY

I LIKE TO BUILD THINGS. ACTUALLY, I ONLY LIKE TO BUILD THINGS if the instructions are written well. Bad instructions leave me frustrated and stuck on the phone with a customer service representative somewhere. I want clear directions and a smooth experience in which everything works right the first time.

I guess that's why I've often longed for a clear set of blueprints for raising my boys, Trent and Troy. With step-by-step instructions, I could have raised my children with the absolute certainty that everything would work right the first time.

There's only one problem. There's no such thing as a step-by-step parenting manual. Even the Bible offers moms and dads principles, not promises. From books to websites to programs (including the *Focus on the Family Broadcast!*), you can find a lot of great parenting tips out there.

But effective parenting doesn't apply those ideas like code entered into an unthinking, unfeeling computer. We can't mix precisely measured ingredients and whip up a perfect family. Effective parents arm themselves with information but apply those strategies in ways that best fit their child according to his or her specific personality temperament and developmental needs.

Children are not mathematical equations to be solved. Which is why parenting isn't rocket science. It's relationship.



**Tough
Questions
from Kids**

**Can we
tell God
everything?**

BOUNDARIES FOR A SAFE RELATIONSHIP

Boundaries are important in any relationship—they're essential to self-respect and others-respect. They create predictability and relational safety. Boundaries mark the emotional and physical lines by which a relationship is governed.

Healthy boundaries allow genuine care and love to thrive and for two people to live both as individuals and a harmonious unit. They allow genuine and godly love to thrive. But if abuse is present, boundaries are often absent, unclear or disrespected. Learning how to set boundaries and uphold them in the face of abuse is critical—and at times, lifesaving.

Two major types of safety in relationships are physical safety and emotional safety. Physical safety is present in a relationship when no physical threats or harm exist. Emotional safety is present when a couple can trust each other and be vulnerable without fear.

Physical safety is violated when a spouse attempts to exert control through behaviors that physically harm, arouse fear, prevent a partner from doing what they wish or force them to behave in ways they do not want. Applying new boundaries in a physically abusive relationship must be done with extra intentionality, support and a safety plan. Without these, there can be dangerous implications. If physical abuse is involved in your situation, don't simply start with announcing new boundaries on your own. Instead, skip to "What do I do next?" to form an action plan and get to place of safety right away.

Creating boundaries that allow for safety is the goal—and a marriage that is safe can begin to grow from there. Safety leads to openness, which can then lead to intimacy. Safety is the first building block for an improved marriage.

—Kari Trent-Stageberg

WHEN KIDS HAVE CELL PHONES

Getting a phone for your teenager is a good way to affirm the fact that your child is growing up, and it's a big step in the dynamics of your family. Your child may be gaining more responsibilities and freedoms, but also more influences and temptations. It is important for us as parents to help them successfully handle these responsibilities and freedoms in healthy ways.

My wife and I sat down with our family to talk about our values and how they relate to having, owning and using phones. We created a contract to help begin the conversation and dialogue regarding the phone and its various freedoms and temptations. A phone is a tool for relationship and certainly requires guidance and openness along the way.

—Danny Huerta

DAD'S LITTLE BLACK BOOK OF PARENTING SECRETS

My dad's death in April of 2017 at the age of 86 came after a steady decline in his health. For months, we had anticipated his passing, and it finally happened on a snowy Friday night. But little did we know that we would discover a wonderful secret that would shape our lives and parenting journey.

Since Dad had moved in with our family for the last four years of his life, the task of sorting through his possessions fell to me. Dad was neat and organized. His shirts and pants were color-coded in the closet and everything was in its rightful place in his dresser drawers.

The top drawer of my dad's old wooden dresser was the one exception. It was a catchall for odds and ends, secret and precious items too sensitive for a filing cabinet and too sentimental for the trash.

There were old love letters between him and my mom from Army days, snapshots of me and my siblings, locks of hair from our first cuts and greeting cards full of heartfelt sentiments. There were notes between my parents from all manner of hospital stays. No emails or texts—just ink on paper. These secret keepsakes stand today as tender testimony of commitment that stood the test of time.

But there in the corner, under the belts, was something I had never before seen. It was a well-worn black book, 3 inches by 5 inches, with a gold-lettered title: *Father's Manual*.

Opening its tattered pages, I could see my dad had spent considerable time in it. My dad was a devout believer, singing in choirs from an early age. In his last few years, we'd find him praying in his chair quite often.

There's an old adage that children don't come with manuals, which would be technically true. Thankfully, the Bible remains a parent's greatest resource. My father's own Bible was always at his side as he retreated to his chair each evening.

But his little black book of parenting secrets was full of marvelous insights and prayers. It was a manual, alright. My dad had starred this passage under the "Help to Be a Good Father" section: "Give me the cheerful strength to lift the burden of troubled hearts from the members of my family without vexing them with the burdens that are mine."

—Paul Batura



FAMILY MATTERS

Answers to your questions...

I tell my children about forgiveness and try to demonstrate it as well—but how can I be sure that they actually get the true meaning of forgiving and being forgiven?

ANSWER:

When we sin, we should ask God to forgive us—and he will (1 John 1:9). It is important to teach children that when they willfully disobey you and do something wrong, they need to ask God to forgive them. They need to ask whoever else was involved to forgive them as well. This helps them learn the difference between right and wrong and reinforces their choice to do what is right.

Often children (and adults) can get caught up in

making similar mistakes repeatedly. They need to come to a point of conscious choice where they say, “I will not be that way or do that anymore!” Repentance helps them do that.

When they stop for a time-out after bad behavior, talk to them about forgiveness, making the following two points: First, when they repent and ask for forgiveness, they are making a decision to leave that behavior and ask God for help to do it right from now on. Second, God wants them to learn to do right because He wants them to have a good life. So when they ask Him for forgiveness, God instantly forgives them. They start again with a clean slate.

Here are some ways to help your kids understand that concept.

- After correcting your children, show them what they could have done instead.
- Once you’ve talked about the sin and prayed about it, don’t harp on it anymore.
- When your child needs to ask forgiveness from God, they might be too uncomfortable to pray because they feel so bad. In this case it may be a good idea to offer a short prayer first.

(Adapted from *FaithLaunch* by John Trent and Jane Vogel)

TOUGH QUESTIONS FROM KIDS

ANSWER:

Yes, we can talk to God about any joy, sorrow, need, worry, doubt or fear that is on our mind. We should not accuse Him of evil or of doing bad things. If we are hurt or angry, we should tell God, but we should also say that we know He is good. We can also ask Him to help us understand and trust Him.

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