

It's Apparent . . .



Raising Godly Children in Today's World

You're a Parent!

John Lehman

It's Apparent ... You're a Parent!
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“Give me some tips on parenting” is not something I’d ask of many. I would of Lehman. I find it nearly impossible to read a book on parenting if I don’t know the author’s family. I do know Lehman’s. That’s why I found it impossible **not** to read this book. It reads as smoothly and pastorally as if he were your mentor across the coffee table, pouring into your life. Think of this practical and biblical book as strong morning coffee for the long day of parenting—with extra shots of Scripture.

Dave Hosaflook (Missionary to Albania)

John doesn’t merely talk the talk—he walks the walk. This book isn’t full of common-sense parenting, because biblical parenting is neither common nor natural. It demands supernatural wisdom and power.

Jeremy McMorris (From the Foreword)

The goal of this book is to help crystallize in parents' minds the importance of making the right choices for their children, and, through considering biblical principles that are laid out in God's Word, to please the Lord by the choices that are made and implanted.

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Foreword

Typically, an author would have someone better known than himself write a foreword to his book. For some strange reason, John has done the opposite, and I'm honored.

John Lehman has lived one of the best "sermons" I've ever seen. His life is truly exemplary in so many areas. His husbanding and parenting stand out above the rest, in my opinion.

John doesn't merely talk the talk—he walks the walk. Actually, he runs the run! John is a runner, and we've put in hundreds of miles together. On those miles, we've literally shed blood, sweat, and tears. Many of those miles "pounding the pavement" were spent discussing marriage and family issues. I was the recipient of a great deal of biblical wisdom over those miles. Many of those "Lehmanisms" have made their way into the McMorris home. I'm thankful that those "Lehmanisms" were profoundly biblical and profoundly practical. Things like, "Serve the Lord with gladness," "Drink water," "Enjoy the people you're with," and, "The pain of the punishment must outweigh the pleasure of the disobedience" are "Lehmanisms" that have now become "McMorrisisms."

This book isn't full of common-sense parenting, because biblical parenting is neither common nor natural. It demands supernatural wisdom and power.

I commend to you John Lehman. It has been my great privilege to have him as a grad school professor, fellow pastor, running buddy, mentor, and friend. He is writing to you as a blessed success. His family of four children and three grandchildren is a living example of the faithfulness of God to a family that seeks to put Him first and keep His commandments.

So, read your Bible, read this book, and “serve the Lord with gladness!”

Jeremy McMorris,

Lead Pastor, Liberty Baptist Church, Dalhart, Texas

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Jim Holmes—thanks for helping me “get this book out of me!” Your attention to detail and expertise helped more than words can express.

Suzie Lehman—your consistent encouragement was such a resource of enablement and motivation.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this book to Candice, Cassie, Cody, and Caitlyn, the children whom I have been privileged to rear in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and to Suzie, my wife, with whom “my heart doth safely trust” (Proverbs 31:1, KJV). I also have been blessed to have two sons-in-law who have godly principles with which they desire to live their lives and invest in their own children.

This book was written as a follow-up to a request from our eldest daughters wanting some guidance in their consideration of, one day, being parents. My wife and I may not have always had the perfect methods in child-rearing, but we always had the right motives. We desired, above anything else, that you, our children, would love God with all your heart and would be willing to serve Him joyfully with your lives as you grew into adults.

One important part of your adult lives will be that of having and rearing children. With your exemplary lives, you have put credence to what I have taught in my role as a pastor. I thank you for your willingness to submit your own wills and to desire to serve Christ by obeying your parents. To be able to state publicly, in my ministry, the importance of abiding by standards and following through with discipline, and then to have you

show that by being willing to do what was asked of you, has been a wonderful privilege. I now trust this book will be of assistance to you as you rear your own children.

I also trust the book will be of help to many other parents who will one day stand before God for the manner in which they disciplined and reared their children. Using God's Word as the premise has been my goal. God has promised to give wisdom liberally to each of us when we ask of Him. His Word is the primary source of this wealth of wisdom and must be our standard for parenting our children.

May God bless you all as you choose to follow Christ, submitting to Him as the standard for your own life and for the lives whom you will influence as parents. May God grant you the ability to do what you know should be done for His honor and glory.

A Note to the Reader

When mentioning children as individuals, reference may sometimes be made interchangeably between “he” and “she” in the pages that follow.

Preface

“**A** is for Adam, and in Adam’s fall, we sinned all.” So read the words of the magisterial New England Primer, first published between 1687 and 1690, used so effectively and extensively by the American nation’s early settlers in the days of the founding fathers.

Because of the Fall—the historic event at the beginning of human history—sin has entered the world. And when it entered, it was guaranteed to be passed on to every child to be born in the human race.

Now you are a parent, you are the father or the mother of another sinner; maybe a beautiful and cute sinner, but a sinner nevertheless. And as you are a parent, a wonderful responsibility, yet a heavy one, rests upon you: as an instrument in the hands of God, you are to do your best to bring the life-transforming message of the Word of God—the gospel of His grace—to the little one entrusted to you. You are to do your best to bring that baby—that child—that adolescent—that young person—from the state of nature to a state of grace. “God ... now ... commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

This little book will encourage you and direct you along the way to do your very best in this great task of parenting!

A glimpse into this chapter . . .

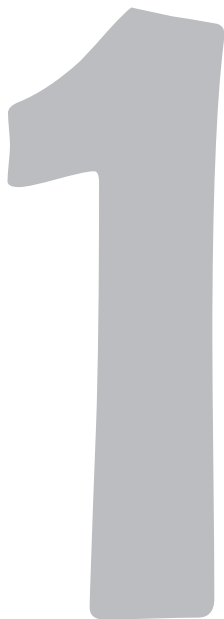
With electronic video devices or iPods, there are very specific, point-by-point instructions. Those are pieces of electronic equipment that one might keep for five years. During the process of child-rearing, although there is no training manual, you will be parenting your children daily for two decades! What's more, your parenting will influence your children for life!

... The goal is to have their children desire, above all else, to serve and please God with their lives.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." (James 1:5).

*Now what . . . do we do to
begin?*

Getting ready to become a mom or dad



“**I**t’s Apparent ... We’re Having a Baby!” Those are exciting words. Parents, whether biological or adoptive, are excited about the newness of life God gives through birth. The reality of all the responsibilities and requirements often does not set in until after the initial thrill of the baby’s arrival. Then comes the realization that someone has to raise this child. That “someone” is the one who endured morning sickness and a variety of adjustments pregnancy brings prior to delivery. Or, in the case of an adoption, the ones who endured hours of paperwork, meetings, and great financial sacrifice to bring that child into their lives.

Consider the scenario for most young couples. They are blessed and excited about bringing their infant home from the hospital. Prior to leaving the hospital, they are given many instructions about insurance and other pertinent details. Once they arrive home and lay their infant in bed, it is very likely they will wonder, “Now what?” Parenting involves everything from changing a baby’s diapers to correcting and directing a baby’s strong will. Both require extreme patience and gentleness.

With electronic video devices or iPods, there are very specific, point-by-point instructions. Those are pieces of electronic equipment that one might keep for five years. During the process of child-rearing, although there is no training manual, you will be parenting your children daily for two decades! What’s more, your parenting will influence your children for life! Not only are they influenced for life, but they will influence many others for a long time to come. There are many books and articles written about parenting, so, much of this has been

written by someone else in a different way. I'm simply privileged to have been entrusted by God to rear four children and, through God's goodness and those experiences, I bring to you what has helped our family.

Qualifications of a Parent

It is incredibly important to evaluate why you should be a parent. Two questions come to mind that each parent needs to answer. The first is: "What qualifies you to *be* a parent?" This boils down to the biological result of a man and woman following God's plan for the procreation of children. God has commanded people to "replenish the earth" and, therefore, He has so orchestrated marriage to fulfill the desires and opportunity for procreation. Any married man or woman may be able to fulfill God's intended role for a parent. However, if the order of God's creation is violated by having a child out of wedlock, the parenting process is not negated. In whatever circumstance that child is placed, it is imperative that the child be reared in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (see Ephesians 6:4). This may necessitate the child being put up for adoption. Although it is difficult to put a newborn into another home, such an action applies the important principle of intentional parenting being the goal—rather than how the child came into the world.

However, just because you *can* be a parent doesn't always mean you are qualified appropriately. So, the next important question is: "What qualifies you *to parent*?" It is going to be extremely difficult to rear a child even under the most ideal circumstances—much more when life's often less-than-ideal

events occur. Only the following of Scriptural principles can truly make someone qualified *to parent*.

Parents: Get Your Hearts Prepared

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.” (James 1:5). There will be many times when it will be difficult to know what is best to do. Those times of weakness will direct you promptly to ask God for His wisdom and help.

Prior to even knowing what topics are essential in the child-rearing process, it is vitally important that the committed couple specifically and intentionally get to know each other's strengths and weaknesses. Attraction to similar interests and special appeals will be the initial draw, and in order to succeed in their goals as time continues, the couple must become dedicated to working through difficulties together. Couples should not expect ease of parenting as a norm. Instead, they must strive together to request God's wisdom (that is—they should “ask God”) and follow through with a common goal. Showing true commitment and kindness to your wife or husband reveals to your children your commitment and love to one who is still imperfect, but is content in the love that is provided.

Parents should be sure their personal relationship is what it is supposed to be—close fellowship with God. For parents to keep this in perspective, they need to inspect their desires to see that they align with God's own heart. They must “... seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these

things will be added to [them]" (Matthew 6:33). They also need to put into practice Psalm 37:4: "Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37:4) If parents will seek to do what God expects from the very beginning, it will continue to be their focus. When they deviate from this, they must willingly seek His forgiveness, and the forgiveness of others, for the failure and resolve again to do that which is right.

The Goal of Parenting

God entrusts children to parents to be raised as lovers of God and followers of His Word. ("Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it"—see Proverbs 22:6.) That means that to pass on the parents' interests, personalities, and talents is not the ultimate goal in child-rearing. The goal is to have their children desire, above all else, to serve and please God with their lives. God expects all parents to help their children become more adept in their natural skills and interests rather than to become clones of their parents. God would have every child realize that He, God, is supreme. When this occurs, the natural outcome will be that they will desire to be faithful children of God, loving and serving Him wholeheartedly.

Parenting requires wholehearted dedication to the task. Consider the following milestones, and endeavor to align them in the pattern of your parenting.

1. Understand the purpose of your child-rearing.
2. Discuss with your spouse any preconditioned expectations you may have.

3. Agree on a plan based on Scripture.

All young couples need to consider why they would and should have children. As was considered earlier, it is important to replenish the world according to God's good design. Going beyond that, parenthood is a way of producing disciples to fill the earth with God-worshippers. Parents need to empower their children to become mature and release them to become independent from them and dependent upon God.

The goal of this book is to help crystallize in parents' minds the importance of making the right choices for their children, and, through considering biblical principles that are laid out in God's Word, to please the Lord by the choices that are made and implanted. The goal in parenting comes to a final conclusion when their child reaches heaven. Until then, the pursuit of proper parenting must continue! For proper parenting to occur, God's Word must be used as the final authority on decisions and directions for parenting.

Adjusting Expectations

When one enters the novel world of parenthood, it will undoubtedly be with some expectations. These may come from a variety of experiences: how each parent was raised, how each parent wished he or she had been raised, how others were raised, and how God desires children to be raised. There will be many preconceived ideas that couples will bring into rearing their children. These ideas will come from their initial experiences as a child. Whether they have had good experiences or bad ones, these have helped formulate how they themselves will exercise their responsibilities

as parents. There will be two different styles of rearing children brought into the marriage—one by each spouse. These experiences need to be discussed so that the couple can make the important decision to fulfill their role as parents as they believe God would have them, rather than based on how their parents raised them. The critical thing is not necessarily to glean all of the information and pool other people's experiences and then base the upbringing upon the popular vote. God wants parents to search the Scriptures and ask *Him* when they "lack wisdom."

In this light, it is extremely important that husband and wife in union consider all of their experiences, aligning their expectations with scriptural principles. As parents do this, their expectations will assist them in keeping their own opinions and experiences from ruling their thoughts. Instead, their focus will be on pleasing Christ.

A glimpse into this chapter . . .

A supreme goal to give your family is that they are to “serve the LORD with gladness.” Anything and everything they do is to be with the joy of the Lord in their lives. As they observe mom and dad doing this, and are reminded when they as children are not, this will become a pattern that will be consistent for life.

*Now what... do I want my child
to be like when he grows up?*

*Preparing an overarching goal for your
child*

2

Ready, Steady ... Aim!

Now, what single motto would you instill in your child if you could boil everything down into one phrase? All children should desire, for their entire life, to serve the Lord with gladness! God desires all people to love Him. The way in which we show love to Him is by obeying Him. It's one thing to serve dutifully and upon demand with no enjoyment or purpose; it's altogether different to obey and serve with a purpose and goal. God allows His children individually to be able to be purposeful in everything they do. Serving with frustration, or as a terribly difficult task, can accomplish the goal of getting something done. However, it is so much more enjoyable to those who observe, as well as to the individual, to joyfully do what is requested. No one likes to have to demand something to be done and to have a bad attitude about it while it is taking place. The bad attitude is difficult for the one who made the requirement because he feels badly that the individual isn't enjoying what was asked. It is also difficult on the one who is frustrated at the task before him. Serving God with one's whole heart brings not only joy to Him, but to the ones who note the service, and especially to the one serving!

A supreme goal to give your family is that they are to "serve the LORD with gladness" (Psalm 100:2). Anything and everything they do is to be with the joy of the Lord in their lives. As they observe mom and dad doing this, and are reminded when they as children are not, this will become a pattern that will be consistent for life.

It is extremely important that parents decide on their own