

10 ACTIONS KIDS NEED FROM CARING ADULTS

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an original masterpiece created by the handiwork of God they won't be as tempted to become a carbon copy of what the X-rated world offers.

Is that tough? Absolutely it's tough. That's why there's so many broken families and messed up kids. It's beyond tough. There will be times when you feel inadequate and your parenting feels insufficient. And I totally understand. So here's the big idea. I am insufficient but God is more than sufficient. I am insufficient as a parent on my own but the good news is God is more than sufficient. This is the God piece of parenting. This is God's sovereignty. When we are insufficient, He is sufficient. And that's good news. And I've got more good news coming for you next week. I hope you come back for that.

Prayer:

God, thank You that You have created each of us to be an original masterpiece. I pray that as we discover that in our own lives that we will learn through the power of Your Holy Spirit and the wisdom that You give us how to discern and delight in the differences of others. God, I pray that as we do the possible – encouragement and being a good role model and finding other role models for our kids and discipline in a way that is good and godly and provides guidance – that as we do the possible You will do the impossible. And as we submit to You that we're insufficient to do all this on our own we thank You that You are more than sufficient in our times of need. May we be different people and different parents because we were here today. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

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saying. What they are doing is they're hearing your spirit. When you lose control they lose respect. And ultimately they will lose control too.

You see why I had us start with everybody raising their hand saying, "We've blown it." We've all blown it. For those of you who've maybe grown up in a church environment or maybe you've stayed away from the church because your parents grew up in an environment and they took a little Bible verse and they took it to extremes. You've heard the rendering of Proverbs 13:24 that says, "*Spare the rod and spoil the child.*" People over the years, a lot of times in the church, have a lot of times taken this as a license to beat their kids. Can I tell you the context in which the rod is used? As a shepherd is using a rod to guide his sheep. To make sure the sheep stay on the right path, to make sure the sheep don't wander into the wolves' den. That's why David in the twenty-third psalm uses that same term "rod" when he says, "*Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me?*"

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that you don't spank or there's never a time for spanking. I'm just saying that you be delicate.

The **second** thing when it comes to discipline is you **be wise**. Be smart. My folks used what we called a "switch" "Bobby, go get me a switch." I learned that the longer I took, the more they cooled down. That was very wise. I would eventually come back – a few days later – carrying a pillow. It always went better. My kids use what they call a "wisdom worker."

What I'm saying to you, think through what you're doing. Think through your discipline and what you say to your kids. "If you hit your sister one more time, I'm going to smack you!" How's that for logic? What does that mean? That if you're bigger and in control that hitting is ok and you can hit because you're in charge? What does that mean? I know that you can stop some behavior by yelling and smacking. You can stop behavior in the moment. But what are you really communicating? Remember discipline is guidance. It's to guide and develop so that you follow through with love.

One of the ways that I want to try to help you be wise with this is five important questions at the bottom of your outline. Try them the next time you have to discipline your kids. These three actions – encouragement, role models, and discipline – one of the keys to all three of these is you and I understanding that kids are very different. Each kid is different. Those of you in here who don't have children, may not understand this but those of us that do – kids from the same mom and same dad and there's more than one kid but your kids are totally different. That's God's sense of humor. For those of you who don't have kids you don't fully get it but it's something like this – one kid comes out with a smile on her face and a rose in her mouth and totally compliant – "Yes, dad, whatever you want. I'm happy to." Then the other kid comes out with a smirk on her face and a cigarette in her mouth and a look in her eyes that says, "The next seven years are going to be tough. Go ahead. I'm going to push you every day! Try to discipline. Go ahead. *Make my day!* I'll eat those five questions for lunch. Try it!"

The truth is every child has a heart and a personality that is uniquely shaped by God. That's why there's not one cookie cutter approach to parenting in the Bible. Every child responds differently because they were made that way by God. In God's handiwork what you're dealing with is an original masterpiece. If we can help kids understand that they're an original masterpiece they won't become a carbon copy of the X-rated world. If you can help kids understand that they're

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What do kids need? They need encouragement. They need role models. And the sixth thing that all kids need from caring adults...

6. They need discipline.

I realize this is not the funnest thing to talk about, that they need discipline. But kids need discipline. They need boundaries. I know that as a parent as kids get to different ages – sixteen, thirteen, ten, We've got to discipline differently. It's not the same as when they were newborns. I do know what I've studied here in God's love letter about discipline. I'll tell you what I've learned about Biblical discipline. Biblical discipline is guidance not punishment. That's what Biblical discipline is. If you want to read a chapter in the Bible on your own read Hebrews 12. Love has to accompany discipline. As a matter of fact you can't have the love the Bible teaches without discipline.

Proverbs 3:11, 12 NLT *"My child don't ignore when the Lord disciplines you and don't be discouraged when He corrects you for the Lord corrects those He loves. Just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights."* Love and discipline go hand in hand. When you see a kid that's totally out of control – we've all seen these before – kids out of control. I don't know where your mind goes to. And I know there are exceptions to everything. I'm not saying this is one hundred percent of the time. But when I see a kid that's out of control I don't think, What an awful kid. I go, Where are his parents? What happened there? And again, there are exceptions to every rule. I've seen kids who are out of control who have the best parents in the world. But for the most part kids growing up without discipline, the Bible says they become a disgrace to their parents. Proverbs 29:15 NIV *"But a child left to himself disgraces his mother."* What do kids need? They need discipline.

Let's go practical. Here's a couple of things to write down.

First, when you discipline be delicate. Discipline must be done with caution. Bodies are fragile and spirits are more fragile. Ephesians 6:4 LB *"Now a word to you parents. Don't keep on scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful. Rather bring them up with the loving discipline the Lord Himself approves with suggestions and godly advice."* You want to make your kids angry? You want to make your kids so resentful that they turn from you? Here's the ingredient. If you want your kids to run from you here's what you do. You operate in extremes. You either discipline so intensely and always being harsh and screaming, you're just intense. Or you have no discipline at all.

Anytime you operate in extremes you will lose. As one of your pastors and somebody who loves kids can I ask you, actually I would beg if begging would help, I would beg that when you discipline, don't discipline in anger. Don't discipline in anger! I see it in fast food restaurants all over the place, any place that will refill my drink for free. Nearly everyday I see yelling and slamming and smacking and spanking and yanking. All this stuff. (And some of you who I've seen recently go, "Did you see me with my kids?" Yes I did!)

Let me tell you what discipline in anger produces. Angry kids. Discipline in anger produces angry kids. Here are the other results humiliation, embarrassment, violence, angry kids. When you're disciplining in anger, you're yelling and screaming, kids are not hearing what you're

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you and wants a relationship with you. Right now I'm not talking to you on this point. But for many people around you that have a relationship with Jesus Christ, if I was to say, "Are you a Christian? Raise your hand." They'd go, that's me! I'm a Christian!" If I'm talking to you as a follower of Christ, your kids need to see you deepening your faith.

Maybe for you deepening your faith begins with you simply showing up at church. If that's you, that's great. But here's what I'd say to you, don't stay there. The Bible is very clear that as parents we are to pass the baton of faith on to our kids.

Look at this classic passage from Deuteronomy 6:5-8 NIV *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your heart. [Watch this!] Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home or when you walk along the road, when you lie down or when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads."*

Why did I underline "hands" and "foreheads"? Because this is what we're to pass on. Foreheads is a symbol of knowledge that we would pass on the knowledge of God's way. Hands is a symbol of our action. That we not only pass on the knowledge of our faith but that our kids would see our faith in action.

I'm not asking you to be a perfect Christian parent. There are no perfect Christian parents. Perfection, or the illusion of perfection in a kid's life only produces intimidation. Kids don't need to see a perfect dad. What kids need to see is a dad who loves God and so badly wants to live his life directed God's ways. Kids don't need to see a perfect Mom. They need to see a mom who loves Jesus Christ and doesn't compromise her life because of her commitment to Christ.

Over the years, there's something parents say that really troubles me. Parents will say "I don't want to impose my faith on my kids. I want them to decide on their own." You know how crazy that sounds? If you're a Christian, you're a follower of Christ, it sounds like to me, "I don't want to impose on my kids that cocaine and killing are wrong. I'd like them to figure that out on their own."

And by the way, it is impossible to impose your faith on your kids. There is something called free will. Nobody can take that away. My question is parents, if you're a Christian, why would God be an option in your home? It's your home. You're paying the bills. You're putting food on the table. You're making rules. There is a lot better chance of a kid making a connection with God while he or she is being forced to go to church than staying at home and sleeping in. Just my opinion, *my very correct opinion!*

One of the things that kids will get when they come to church, they're going to get role models. Remember I said there's two parts of role models. Parent as a role model then others are a role model. Every kid needs other significant adults in their life to be role models. One of the reasons I love this church and my grandkids coming to this TFB church, there's this army of people that are investing into my grandkids, if you are one of them, I say a sincere "Thank You!"

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You can teach those all day long but you can only reproduce who you are. So they see it in you. Under this banner of role models there's several things. Let me give you two things to write down that I think a lot of parents have stopped thinking about or it's fallen off their radar.

The first is this. What do you model, parents? **You must model integrity.**

Why is it that all studies show that in schools today the cheating is going way up? Why are kids cheating more and more? Is it because education is getting more difficult? I don't think so. I think it's because kids have been tutored during their growing years on how to lie and cheat at home. They've seen thousands of examples from mom and dad of how to stretch the truth and flat out lie and compromise their integrity when the truth becomes uncomfortable.

That might make you feel uncomfortable. Some of you might be thinking, Are you saying I lie at home? Do you need examples?

The phone rings – “Tell them I'm not here.” I realize that's a totally fictional illustration and you can't identify with that one at all.

How about “Give me one of those doughnuts and just tell mom they gave us eleven.” (I don't know where I got that one from.)

Or you take your kids to the movies and you tell your kids, “Don't say anything about your age because I don't want to pay an adult price for you. Because God knows, you don't act like an adult! So we shouldn't have to pay adult prices.”

You need any more examples? The fabric of our society is woven together with thousands of these little fibs that lead up to one big integrity problem. One of the lies of our culture is that a lie is only a lie if you're caught. Guess what? Your kids are catching you all the time. To kids integrity is important. It's very important to God.

The Bible says in 1 Chronicles 29:17 NIV “*I know my God that You test the heart and are pleased [underline “pleased”] with integrity.*” God loves integrity, people of integrity.

Let me give you a little advice. When you blow it with integrity, when you miss the mark – and you will – then apologize to your kids. An apology is an act of integrity. “Son, last night at the movie theater I did something that was really wrong. And I am so sorry. I'm going to go back and pay the difference.” ... “Sweetheart, I missed your game yesterday and I said yes to somebody at work. By saying yes to them I said no to you and I'm sorry. That was wrong.” ... “Son, I'm sorry I told you to tell Mom that there were only eleven doughnuts. I'm even more sorry that I told her that you ate the one doughnut.” Your kids know that you're not perfect. But you know what they'd love? For you to admit it every once in a while

Here's another thing. What else do you role model? **You deepen your faith.**

Some of you who are going, “Deepen your faith? I don't even know if I have a faith. Someone just invited me to church or I've been coming for a while and I'm just checking out the whole God thing.” If that describes you can I say to you, we're thrilled that you're here. That this can be a safe place for you to come and try to figure out who God is and that He's madly in love with

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home runs. Right? What if after that game we said this, whether they struck out or hit a home run, what if we said, “I love watching you play baseball. I love it.” That doesn’t say anything about the home runs. It doesn’t say anything about the strike out. What is that? That is encouragement beyond performance. “I love watching you play baseball.” This type of encouragement says this: that I’m going to encourage you regardless of how you perform. And in that encouragement here’s what you’re going to hear: “I love you, I believe in you.”

Let’s go practical. Mom, dad, grandparent, aunt, uncle, whatever, a little kid brings an art project that they made. You could pat them on the head and say, “That’s a really nice job. You’re a great artist,” and send them away with their little fix of approval. Or you could say, “Whoa! Tell me how you did that!” And then you sit down with them. And guess what they get when you say, “Tell me how you did that,” they’re not getting your approval but they’re getting your interest. And that’s what they want. Then in their interest and their dialogue they’re able to discover in themselves some things about themselves and be able to begin to see how God created them and wired them to be so very different and discover their God given gifts.

Encouragement that says I love you and I believe in you regardless of your performance.

Chances are you’re going, “I buy into that. I get it but how do I do it. Where does that ability to do that come from?” It comes from your own heart. The words that come out of your mouth are birthed in your soul, in your heart, in who you are. That’s why Jesus said in Matthew 12:35 NLT “*A good person produces good words from a good heart. And an evil person produces evil words from an evil heart.*” So we’ve got a choice. I can use careless words that stab. Or I can use careful words that build up, that encourage. It starts with me.

What do kids need? They need encouragement.

5. All kids need (from caring adults) role models.

Good kids have significant adults in their lives who are role models. All studies point to this that whether a kid grew up in a Cambodian refugee camp, a housing project in Chicago, or a middle class home in Tulare County if they are a healthy kid they all had significant other adults who were in their life and cheering them on.

There’s two parts to the role model. There’s *parent* as role model and there’s *other* as role model.

Let’s start with parent as role model. Parents remember what I said last week. You are being watched by your kids. Last week I said the number one influence-er in a kid’s life is a parent because they’re watching their parent’s values, beliefs and actions. Kids are watching how you talk to one another, how you treat people, what you do with your finances, how much alcohol you drink, how you resolve conflict, how you treat strangers. Basically think about it like this. Your life is being bugged. You’re being wired. You’re under surveillance 24/7. You are under great risk of identity theft. The goal is that they would steal the best part of your identity not the worst. And by the way, you’re just going to have a very difficult time getting kids to possess these five Cs – Confidence, Character, Conviction, Compassion, Competence, if they don’t see it in your life.

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with small encouragement. It doesn't have to be intense. "Hey! You're breathing! That is great!" ... "You're dressed. I love it! Your nose ring matches your belt." Whatever it is.

Parents, here's the key. Don't expect encouragement back. Sometimes parents say, "They never say anything nice to me." You're the parent! You be the parent and let them be the kid.

Here's the deal. If you don't expect encouragement back, you will never be disappointed. The truth is most kids don't have what I would call the emotional vocabulary to know what to say and how to say it. They just don't say things right. That's why they comprise short little statements like, "I hate you!" They don't really *hate* you. They just don't have the emotional vocabulary to know what to say. What they're really saying is, "I don't know what to say. I'm going to choose to act like a four year old because I know I really don't hate because if I had to live out in the world by myself I know I couldn't survive. Therefore I do really love you. I just don't know how to say it so I'm going to say I hate you but I really love you." That's really kind of what they're saying.

So see it, say it positively and don't expect anything in return.

2. You say it but you say it beyond performance.

Put a little star next to this one. That star means "I've got to think about this." That star means, "This is tough." That star means, "This is advanced. Surface encouragement doesn't have much sticking power. Superficial encouragement... "Nice shirt." I might remember that when I go into my closet that mom liked this shirt but it just doesn't have much sticking power. "Nice haircut." Not that big a deal. Or "I went to your basketball game. You don't sweat much compared to the other kids on the bench." That's surface encouragement.

What I'm saying here is you say it but you say it beyond performance. Here's what I've observed. Most language directed at kids falls into two categories – shame oriented or performance oriented.

For some of you I see the heads nodding. You don't even need me to explain this because you grew up in a home where if you did something bad you got the look or the word of shame and if you did something good you got the pat on the head of approval. What do these little quick fixes of shame or praise do to people? It makes them dependent on other people for how they feel about themselves. We all tried to perform so that we would all get the Proud-of-you. We've grown up to be these approval addicts.

Let's face it. When it comes to kids they're going to fail. They're going to mess up. Now, if that's the only language we have in the home, let's think about it. If they fail, they're always going to get, "Shame on you! We've got to figure out how do we say encouragement that is beyond their performance so that we don't create more approval addicts like ourselves. And we ultimately break the cycle.

For example. A kid plays a baseball game. He can either hit a home run or strike out. If he hits a home run we say, "I'm proud of you." If he strikes out we say, "Shame on you. You should have practiced more." What if...? You might think that's a sports illustration but that's a life illustration. Because isn't it true that every day in our life we're either striking out or hitting

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On the other side of the wall are the faces and the names and the images of the people who have said harmful and hurtful things to you. When you see their face you can immediately remember what they said or the tone in which they spoke to you. Their words have left a mark. Their words have stung.

If you're like most people when you walk down the hallway of your life the side that is negative, the side where hurtful words came are easier to remember. The negative ones are easier to recall because words hurt. They leave scars. Yet as a child we're taught the most ridiculous fable ever invented. You know what this is! "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me." Right? Whoever made that up is an idiot! Because it's not true. I'd much rather be hit with a stick. You remember words forever. The Bible says in Proverbs 12:18 NCV "*Careless words stab like a sword.*" Circle "careless" and "stab." Experience tells us what the Bible says is true.

I learned this week of a study about how the brain processes pain. I won't tell you all about the study mostly because I didn't fully understand it myself. But basically the essence of this study was this. Our brain processes emotional pain and physical pain essentially the same way. So think about this. When I'm hit my brain literally says, "That hurt." When I have emotional wounds coming in my brain says, "That literally hurt!" The brain perceives little difference. Just as physical scars leave marks, so do emotional wounds.

We all know this. Yet as parents we continue to use words that are going to leave marks and scars. Our words become modifiers to kids lives. You have all seen this before. Let me explain what I mean by a modifier. A parent will talk about his or her child and use a modifier and then that kid actually grows up to become how they were modified. "This is my shy daughter Jill." As Jill cowers behind Mom's legs because she's heard that modifier a million times. "This is Carlos, my demon child!" And Carlos has this evil laugh and then sets a palm tree on fire.

Words are powerful. Words can either build confidence or they can destroy hope. What do kids need? They need encouragement. How does this make any difference to me today? Let's be practical with this. How can you and I become more encouraging people? I suggest you write a couple things down on your outline.

1. See it and say it positive.

When you see it, say it in a positive way. Really what I'm asking you to do is catch kids doing things right. If you were to listen to all of the words that are said in a kid's home or in their life they're typically negative words. "Why didn't you put your back pack away?... Who left their cleats on the pool table? ... How many times do I have to tell you to put the toilet seat down?"

What if you instead of seeing it and saying it in a negative way what if you were to turn things around? What if you were to see it and then say it positive? You walk in and the toilet seat's down, "All right! The toilet seat's down! This is awesome. Let's throw a party. Here's a cupcake. Light the candles. Let's go!" See it and say it in a positive way.

Some of you, you need to picture your kids with a tattoo on their forehead. For some that's not all that difficult to picture, is it? But the tattoo says, Encourage me. Every time you see them you see that descriptive, that screaming out, Encourage me. If you're not encouraging at all start

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It is so great to see you back this week. Your presence and the crowds just communicate what I discovered last week that people really care about being good parents and getting a little bit of help and hope. Let's start with a little bit of hope. Everybody raise their right hand. Please, Repeat after me: "I've messed up!" There you go! There's the hope. The hope is you're not alone. The truth is when it comes to parenting and our relationships we've all messed up. You're not the only person on the planet who has had a tough time or did some things they wish they could take back. We go to those places of guilt all the time with the desire to be a good dad/mom thinking of our kids and wondering, Is there anything that I've done that's going to send them into intensive psychotherapy later in life?

If you weren't here last week let me just give you a quick review. Last week I said I'm not going to spend a lot of time talking about how bad the X-rated culture is. I'm not going to use a lot of scare tactics to drive people into a kind of isolation bubble they could then live in and hide out in. I'd rather give hope tactics, to talk about how we can make a difference. What I said was the best weapon against an X-rated culture is you. Then I also said that the goal of parenting is not to be the ideal parent but rather to set high ideals and begin to go after them.

Last week we started with painting the picture of what the end in mind might look like. We said, let's create a picture of what a healthy kid might look like. Not just a healthy child but a healthy human. We said this person would have confidence. That they would have character meaning a moral compass to make good decisions. They would have conviction or beliefs. They would have compassion for other people and the hurts around the world. And ultimately they would live a competent life meaning that they would be able to use their gifts and skills to make a difference in this world and not just to take up space. In addition to that, I'm talking over three weeks of ten actions that every kid needs from caring adults. Whether the caring adult is mom or dad, grandpa, grandma, aunt, uncle. Really what I'm talking about is relationship principles. But I'm doing it in the contextualization of parenting.

Last week we talked about three things all kids need, Belief, Presence, Memories. Today we're picking up at number four. What kids need from caring adults, the fourth thing I think they need is...

4. They need Encouragement

If you are thinking about a specific child or kid or person and you want to know whether they need encouragement, here's a little test. Take a small mirror and put it right under their nose. If you sense that they're breathing they need encouragement. Encouragement is one of the deepest cravings that we have. In all my years of working with people I've never met anybody who said, "Stop encouraging me. Please. I've had it with encouragement. Anymore and I'm going to burst!" No. Nobody does that. Most people get encouragement to just below the ankle. Encouragement is food for our soul and we long for it.

I want you for a second to do something with me. Go back in time and pretend you're walking down a hallway that represents your life. On one wall of the hallway are all these photographs and pictures of men and women who have influenced your life. They've influenced your life in a positive way. They said words that have contributed to you and to your identity. Words like "I believe in you." On that one side, these are basically people who are cheerleaders in your life.

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4. E_____

“Careless words stab like a sword...” Proverbs 12:18 (NCV)

“A good person produces good words from a good heart, and an evil person produces evil words from an evil heart.” Matthew 12:35 (NLT)

5. R_____ M_____

*“I know, my God, that You test the heart and are pleased with integrity.”
1 Chronicles 29:17 (NIV)*

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your heart. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home or when you walk along the road, when you lie down or when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.” Deuteronomy 6: 5-8 (NIV)

6. D_____

“My child, don’t ignore when the Lord disciplines you and don’t be discouraged when He corrects you for the Lord corrects those He loves. Just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights.” Proverbs 3: 11-12 (NLT)

*“The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.
Proverbs 29:15 (NIV)*

“Now a word to you parents. Don’t keep on scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful. Rather bring them up with the loving discipline the Lord Himself approves with suggestions and godly advice.” Ephesians 6:4 (LB)

Five Important Questions

What did you do?

Was that right or wrong?

How could you have handled this better?

Next time what do you think you could do?

Should you not, what would be a fair & natural consequence?