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# Preface

**T**he world in which you raise your child is vastly different from the world in which you grew up, yet no parent chooses the era in which he or she raises children.

The world has changed. It has abandoned the idea of moral absolutes and has embraced moral relativism. The overriding consideration, however, is that God's resources are far more powerful than the negative opposing factors that challenge the task of successful parenting. You as a parent can win with love, consistency, encouragement and guidance from God's Word to create a foundation that will allow your child to succeed, embrace purpose and live the life God wants His children to live.

This means that those who are considered "out of date" by holding on to the following realities may be in a minority, yet aligned with God's purposes and intent:

- God has never changed.
- The biblical principles of honesty, morality, integrity, purity and commitment are still the bedrock values of a family.
- Biblical values are enduring and timeless.
- That which may be legal is not necessarily moral.
- Marriage refers to the relationship of a husband and wife who have exchanged marital vows.

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- Following what “everybody else” is doing does not guarantee a “happily ever after” or the best interest of the person who is doing it.

While parenting obviously includes the decisions we make as parents (boundaries we set, where we draw the lines of acceptability and so forth), this book focuses on you as a parent—how your actions affect your child, what your relationship with your son or daughter is like, how you make the decisions to be there for your child and how you handle success or failure yourself.

Think with me how your generation differs from the previous one. Sociologists would refer to most of you reading this as Gen Xers (born between 1961 and 1981), with a smattering of millennials (born between 1981 and 2001) thrown in for good measure. Your first cell phone, the one that you had in your teen years, has probably since been replaced by a smartphone. The Internet has become commonplace in more households, bringing the entire world to your reach with a few taps on the screen of your cell phone or clicks of the mouse on your computer.

Now, in your children’s generation, many young people communicate by texting or tweeting and take advantage of other related technological developments. What does this mean for you as a parent? It means there’s less actual face-to-face time with your children. When your teen rolls her eyes and responds, “Whatever!” you aren’t exactly sure what that means.

The world’s greatest mission field is not the continent of Africa or the highlands of Papua New Guinea, nor is it the jungles of South America. As in need as these places are, and as important as each person in these geographic areas is to

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our heavenly Father, the greatest mission field in the world is your own home. There is a need for you to reach your children with the love of God.

Why? Because forces more sinister and frightening than the vipers of the jungles or the terrorists that would gladly wreak havoc on your community are very real, and ideologies that will strive to lead your children astray are formidably present. However—and this is a powerful caveat—God’s enabling grace and power in your home are more than sufficient to meet your needs and the needs of your children, day by day and throughout the journey you have embarked upon.

What I’ve written in this book didn’t come out of lessons I learned in a classroom or from a sociology textbook. It is the fruit of more than a half-century of experience working with families all over the world. I was also prompted to write it because of my desire to pass on to you what I have learned by hands-on parenting as my wife, Darlene, and I raised three perfectly normal kids to maturity. We observed what makes for healthy families and what parents need to avoid doing so that you can see your dreams and goals fulfilled.

I must confess, however, that I write this book with a measure of trepidation because I’m fully human, which means I have made some mistakes in the journey too. However, I believe I’ve learned from my failures and have trusted God to do what I could not accomplish in the parenting journey. May God enable you to find the same satisfaction and joy in raising your child(ren) that we have experienced ourselves.



Mission Viejo, CA

# Acknowledgments

In writing this book, I would indeed be remiss in not recognizing the impact of my parents on my personal life; however, I feel especially indebted to my mother, who not only loved her three children but also showed us what being a godly wife and mother is about.

Recognizing how our world has changed since I wrote *Train Up a Child and Be Glad You Did*, I have interviewed as many people as possible—friends and strangers alike—asking them, “What’s the toughest job you have faced in raising your children?” Some already have adult children and could look back over the parenting experience. Others are in the process of raising children and a few are just starting out as parents of newborns. All of them gave insights to problems and challenges that are commonly faced by parents the world over.

I am also indebted to my daughters, Bonnie Craddick and Nancy Deushane, along with my daughter-in-law, Cheryl Sala, who very candidly pointed out issues that needed clarification. Sarah Chapin also read the manuscript and represented the generation just starting on the journey of parenting.

Once again, I express my sincere appreciation to Yna Reyes of OMF Literature Inc., who urged me to write this book, and Beng Alba, whose literary skills polished the manuscript and made it more readable. I am also indebted to my administrative assistant, Luisa Ampil, for her many hours of research and encouragement.

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Parents, my prayer is that God will use this book to encourage you. I fervently hope that your children will bless you as ours have us over the years!

# 1

## His Life Is in Your Hands

**W**hen God deigns to change the course of human history, He does not send an army marching and conquering; rather, He sends into the world an infant, a tiny bundle of human flesh weighing six or seven pounds, who will grow into an adult who can step upon the stage of history and change the world.

May I illustrate this truth? The year was 1809, and the army of Napoleon Bonaparte was on the march. People were wondering what national power would be the next to fall to his armies; but while the troops of Napoleon were marching, babies were being born.

Significant is the fact that in 1809, the same year of Napoleon's conquest, Abraham Lincoln, destined to change the history of the United States, drew his first breath of country air in a cabin in Kentucky.

It was also the year that William Gladstone, destined to become one of Britain's greatest prime ministers, was born. Also born that year was noted composer Felix Mendelssohn and American author Edgar Allan Poe.

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The world was changed far more significantly by the individuals who were born that year than by the battles that were fought.

I never hold a newborn in my arms without looking into the face of that child and wondering if this is possibly the infant who, as an adult, will discover a cure for cancer or HIV; or someday become a prime minister or president; or be another Margaret Thatcher, who led Britain out of a financial morass; a Mother Teresa, who ministered to the outcasts of India; or an Aung San Suu Kyi, the remarkable woman who has led Myanmar toward democracy. Who knows what great potential lies within the child you brought into the world?

The baby may look tiny and helpless, but he or she is already a complete person. The little bundle of joy dependent on others' care has a mind of their own, a brain capable of thinking and a voice that can express strong feelings and emotions. Your child has powers of communication that will be freely exerted in the wee hours of the morning when you want to sleep. They will express emotions and desires in no uncertain terms. They're a full-blown little person distinct from everybody else in the world. You lack experience and believe me, you're going to face the most radical change in the history of your world: you are now a parent!

Suppose you work at a jewelry store—say, Tiffany in New York or Fe Panlilio in Manila—and there is an unexpected power outage. The store manager, knowing that you are completely trustworthy, hands you a black box about the size of a cigar box and says, “Here, take this! This contains hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of diamonds, our largest and best ones. Take it home with you and guard it with your life. It



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will be far safer with you than it would be in the store without protection or an alarm system. Bring it back when you know the power has come back on.” You protest but he convinces you that this is what he wants. You walk out of the store, casting furtive glances over your shoulder. What do you do when you arrive home? Hide the diamonds under your bed or simply leave the box in the trunk of your car?

I, for one, would want protection, whether it means sleeping with a baseball bat near the side of my bed or calling the police and saying, “Look, I’ve got several hundred thousand dollars’ worth of diamonds under my bed. Can you send someone to my home to stand guard over these jewels?”

Okay, that’s a rather preposterous illustration; but I must tell you, the infant that you brought home from the hospital is worth more than all the diamonds in the world. That baby is your own flesh and blood, formed with the DNA of generations who have lived before you, the blending of your life and that of your mate. How can you put a price tag on your child?

Though many years have passed since my wife and I brought our firstborn home from the hospital, the memories of how helpless and unprepared I felt will be with me for the rest of my life. When I held our firstborn in my arms I thought, “This is my child, my flesh and blood! How do I love and care for this baby?”

Being a parent is one of the last holdouts of amateurs. To drive an automobile, practice medicine, fly an airplane or become almost any kind of a professional, you first must go to school, pass tests proving your proficiency, and be licensed by an appropriate agency or authority. But when it comes to being a parent, arguably one of the hardest “jobs” in

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the world, no professional training is required. You simply become a mom or dad the moment your child is born.

If you would tremble because you had several hundred thousand dollars' worth of precious gems in your home, how can you take lightly the responsibility you have for the child you brought home from the hospital?

That responsibility is made more difficult and challenging by the world in which we live today. You don't have to be a pessimist to acknowledge that it is more challenging to raise a child in today's sex-oriented, crime-and-violence-saturated world than it was for your parents and, God knows, your grandparents.

However, no parents ever had the choice of deciding in what era or period of history their children would be born or, in many cases, where their family would be raised. So how do you respond to this awesome challenge that has been thrust upon you? Shrug your shoulders and say, "It's no tougher today than when I grew up and I made it, so my kids can make it as well"? Or do you say, "I know being a parent is a tough job, but I'm determined to find God's help in being the mother or father He wants me to be"?

This book is more about you who molds and shapes the life of your child, one day at a time, than it is about your child. In his book, *Raising Positive Kids in a Negative World*, the late Zig Ziglar said that the key to successful parenting isn't what parents do, but what they are. An old aphorism says that the apple never falls far from the tree, which is parabolic for the truth that your child—unless God providentially changes the equation—is apt to become like you, whether that is a positive or a negative thing.

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### DEFINING ISSUES THAT WILL SHAPE YOUR FUTURE

Thinking about some of the cultural issues that surround us today will help prepare you for the future.

#### **Who is going to be in charge for the next eighteen years?**

In his book *100 Years from Now*, Steve Murrell relates his experience teaching table manners to his sons, then ages three, five and seven. The rule: No one was to leave the table unless he had been excused by mom or dad. For several days, the boys remembered. Then one day, the three-year-old finished his meal and quietly started to leave the table, “trying to look invisible,” as his dad related.

“Jonathan, sit down,” Steve instructed, as the boy headed for the refrigerator. “But I want some more milk,” he replied. “Jonathan,” his dad began, “you know you are not supposed to get up from the table until you finish eating.” Turning his cup upside down, spilling what milk was in the cup on his pant leg, Jonathan said, “But I need more milk. See?”

Sensing the exchange could go on forever, Steve said, “Jonathan, who’s the boss here?” Looking his father squarely in the face, the toddler candidly replied, “*Me and you, Dad!*” which left the entire family in laughter.

Norman Schwarzkopf, the distinguished general who led the coalition forces in the Persian Gulf War, is remembered not only for his impressive military record, but also for his intelligence, modesty, warmth and dedication to fellow service members. On one occasion, General Schwarzkopf told how he was sent to the Pentagon rather early in his career and had been there for only a few days when his superior said (my paraphrase), “Norm, I’ve got to go on a trip. Let’s walk down the hall and we’ll talk.”

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“Yes, sir,” replied Schwarzkopf, adding, “But while you are away, what do you want me to do?”

“Take charge!”

“Yes, sir, but what do you want me to do?”

“When placed in command, take charge!”

“Yes, sir, but what do I do?”

“Just do the right thing!”

The world’s oldest parenting manual, the Bible, addressed that issue centuries ago; and the instructions of this grand old book, certified by centuries of history, are very simple—parenting is the raising of children by parents, not the raising of parents by children.

Profound? Not really, but often unrealized.

Should a spacecraft from Mars land on the front lawn of a home, and a weird-looking creature descend from the contraption and walk to the door of a house, and a child—say, about six to twelve years of age—answer the door, and the Martian ask, “Who is in charge here?” an honest reply would be, “Well, I am! Mom and Dad think they are but actually, I’m the one who calls the shots around here.”

While your child’s involvement with a peer group is an important factor in shaping attitudes, values and goals as your youngster grows to maturity, you as a parent will always be the most powerful factor in determining the destiny of your child.

### **What style of parenting will you choose?**

This is an issue that would have been best addressed before you said, “I do”; nonetheless, it is an important one as you think of the future, the challenges that your child will face in life, and how you can best help them lead a productive and

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useful life to cope with living in a world where the values are often between the poles of secular and pagan. Studies have shown that if a person has given up on church (and sometimes even given up on God), that individual is most likely to return to church and renew his or her faith immediately after the birth of a first child, the result of realizing that parents are responsible for the gift of life and need plenty of help raising that child.

To a very large degree, the strength of your family determines how your child will cope with temptation and faith challenges, especially in the teen years. In his book *The Secrets of Happy Families*, Bruce Feiler points to several studies that demonstrate how parents continue to be the single greatest influence in the life of a child.<sup>1</sup>

Long ago a father cried out, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh. 24:15). This commitment becomes easier to follow and runs deeper when a husband and wife jointly commit to biblical values and determine, in spite of their failures and own humanity, to embrace the timeless principles of parenting recorded in Scriptures.

### **How will you respond to the changing culture of your generation?**

Culture is like a picture frame that holds a photo of your family, something that is neither right nor wrong in itself. It is to be embraced or challenged in relation to what God says in His Word. Sadly, our culture today is radically going downstream. Read a newspaper, flip through a fashion magazine, turn on your TV, or watch the latest releases in a theater, and compare what you read or view now in relation to what was accepted a generation ago.

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You can no more control the culture outside your door than could Lot (Abraham's nephew) when God made the decision to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because their wickedness was very great in the eyes of God. Yet in that very period of history, recorded Moses, God chose Abraham, flawed at times, to be the progenitor of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. "I have chosen him," said God as written by Moses, "so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him" (Gen. 18:19, NIV).

You can, however, control the culture within the four walls of your home—your domain, your turf, your territory and your private world. But by ignoring the culture that is out there and pretending that your child will be able to navigate it alone guarantees exposure to all sorts of issues and makes your child vulnerable to predators who could rob him or her of their purity and purpose in life. You have about eighteen years to outline reasons to pursue righteousness, the right basis for self-worth to stand apart from the crowd, and the source of strength to refuse to knuckle under the mentality of "Everybody else is doing it. Why not me?"

### **What values will become the foundation for your home and family?**

"Family values," as a Scotsman once put it, "are better caught than taught!" Simply stated, they are best displayed in the lives of parents and are ultimately embraced by the children who are part of the family. Every parent teaches a value system of some kind, either by his or her failure to live out those values or by quietly demonstrating a commitment

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to them. Even failure situations—the kinds requiring the acknowledgment of wrongdoing or sin that needs forgiveness and healing—are teaching opportunities.

For many decades, my wife and I have been involved in family ministries. In the '70s, we began to sense that families were changing the world over. The number of traditional families (a family led by a mother and a father raising two kids plus the pet dog, living in a comfortable house surrounded by a white picket fence) was becoming fewer and fewer, and whatever had been “traditional” on every continent was rapidly being challenged.

We responded to that need by starting a radio program, *Guidelines for Family Living*. Before we began production, I discussed the cultural issues with Tom Fulghum, then director of Radio HCJB in Quito, Ecuador. “How can I create a program that will impact families when cultures the world over are so different?” I asked. His reply was this clear: “Don’t forget that God gave us but one book—the Bible. There is not a Bible for Asians and another for Americans and another for Africans. While there are different translations, there is but one message to the family, and that is timeless and universal.”

Never shall I forget the time my wife and I were on a flight to Manila, when we each took paper and pencil, made a list of the respective values we felt were important to teach our children, and then compared the lists.

We were very much on the same page because both of us were equally committed to the realization that we—not the world—were in control of what we did, what we talked about in our family, what we believed to be important, and how we chose to respond to our changing culture and environment.

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**In an ungodly world, how will you find God's power and strength to raise godly kids who will adopt biblical values and, in due time, pass them on to their own children?**

While unhappy, broken families are diverse in many ways, healthy and happy families have many elements in common, one of which is a deep commitment to each other. This explains why a commitment to common values, a common faith in God, and the principles of God's word is necessary. We must also remember there is forgiveness with God, even as we must learn how to forgive, how to love and how to fight fiercely against anything that would destroy us.

### **IT'S ALL IN YOUR HANDS**

Many centuries ago, two teenage boys decided to play a trick on one of the wise, old philosophers who wandered about the Agora, a marketplace in ancient Athens. They captured a tiny bird, then approached the elder as one of them concealed the bird behind his back so the old man could not see it. The boy asked, "Wise man of Athens, I have in my hands a bird. Tell me: Is it dead or is it alive?"

If the old man said "dead," the boy would open his hands and let the bird fly away, proving the old man wrong. If, on the other hand, he said "alive," then crunch! The boy would squeeze the little bird to death and then hold it up. They were quite certain that they could make a fool of him either way.

By now a crowd had gathered to watch this confrontation of wisdom and foolishness. The old man thought pensively for a moment, then looking into the face of the lad holding the bird replied, "I know not whether the bird is dead or alive, but this I know: its life is in your hands."



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Parents, an awesome responsibility confronts you—the gift of life, that of a child that will not only change your life but could possibly change the world!

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### Thinking Further

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- While the task of parenting seems to be enormous, God’s grace and strength are more than equal to the task. Parenting is a day-by-day journey and God has placed your child in your care to demonstrate His faithfulness and His grace to provide what you lack.
- Do you ever wonder if you are doing “the right thing” when it comes to parenting? Have you and your spouse taken time to consider what are the nonnegotiable values you want to teach your kids? I suggest you independently make a list of these and then exchange the list with each other.