

# CHANGE

**HELPING**  
**ANY** child at  
**ANY** age with  
**ANY** problem



By Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN

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National Center for Biblical Parenting, 76 Hopatcong Drive, Lawrenceville, NJ  
08648-4136

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HOW TO HELP ANY CHILD WITH ANY PROBLEM AT ANY AGE

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Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN

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The names of people who have come to the National Center for Biblical Parenting for counseling have been changed. Some illustrations combine individual stories in order to protect confidentiality. Stories of the authors' children have been used by permission.

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To obtain a complete resource list or have Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller present their material live, you may contact the National Center for Biblical Parenting, 76 Hopatcong Drive, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648-4136, (800) 771-8334 or visit the website at: [www.biblicalparenting.org](http://www.biblicalparenting.org)

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# Table of Contents

Starting Strong .....	5
Making a Major Shift in Parenting .....	13
The Map Mentality.....	19
The Arena .....	29
Next Steps .....	35

## Chapter 1

# Starting Strong

**P**arents and grandparents, please pause for a moment and reflect with us on the sacred adventure we're about to take: a journey into the heart of a child. We'll take you there, show you what the Bible says about it, and give you insight to help you work with your child in powerful ways.

In fact, this way of working with children is so powerful we use it to help any child at any age deal with any challenge. Parents are often surprised by the results they see in a relatively short period of time. Here's what Lisa said about her ten-year-old son who is strong willed.

## CHANGE

*“I can’t believe the change we’ve seen in two months while working this plan. I thought my son was doomed to be resistant to me for the rest of his life. The home therapy practice sessions we did using these principles have given us new hope. He’s not perfect and we’re still working on things, but we no longer have the pattern of saying no or being defiant. Yesterday I told him he needed to vacuum the living room. He said, “That’s not my job.” I reminded him that we’re working on cooperation and he stopped opposing me and he did it. I am so excited about the progress. We will definitely continue to use these strategies in other areas of his life as well.”*

When you enter the heart of a child, you’re entering a sacred space. After all, God created people to be different than animals. He gave them hearts. So, before we proceed, please consider the holiness of this moment.

God asked Moses to do something similar when, through the burning bush, he said, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” (**Exodus 3:5**)

When Saul saw the blinding light he fell to the ground (**Acts 9:4**). When Isaiah had the vision of God on his throne, he humbly proclaimed, “Woe to me!” (**Isaiah 6:5**)

Why compare the heart of a child with those glimpses of God’s presence? It’s because God has made a significant shift in his work with people from the Old Testament to the New. Under the Old Covenant the law was written on tablets of stone. God’s presence was embodied in the ark of the covenant (**Exodus 25:22**) or in the tabernacle (**Exodus 25:8**) or in the Holy of Holies in the magnificent temple (**Exodus 30:6**).

But even in the Old Testament God promised something new and fresh, something very personal about his presence. He promised that someday, and that day is today, that he would write his law on our hearts (**Jeremiah 31:33**).

It's the heart of a person has become the place where Jesus wants to live (**Ephesians 3:17**) and where the Holy Spirit works (**1 Corinthians 3:16**).

In this book we will guide you on a tour past the behavior of your child into the heart. The potential is endless. When you get into the heart you see desires (**Psalms 37:4**) and emotions (**John 14:1**), two things that get kids into trouble a lot of the time. For example:

- *A fourteen-year-old son wants things to go a certain way and when they don't, he mistreats others including his parents.*
- *A three-year-old has a hard time with transitions because she emotionally invests in her activity of the moment.*
- *A seven-year-old has fits of rage when corrected, or a two-year-old has a temper tantrum when you say no.*

Desires and emotions are just two things that get kids into trouble. Next, we come to beliefs. Those also take place in the heart (**Romans 10:9-10**). Kids often believe strange things about life such as, "My job description in life is to have fun." So, when asked to do work, kids react. Or, some kids believe, "If my brother is annoying I have the right to punch him," or, "Homework is a waste of time," or "Chores are Mom's work and she's trying to pass her work off on me." Those kinds of misbeliefs result in attitude and behavior issues.

## CHANGE

Focusing on behavior change is not enough. Lasting and deeper change takes place when we address the heart. The heart also contains motivations, passions, decisions, and commitments. In short, the heart is a holy place, and when we start to work in it, as parents or grandparents, we're standing on holy ground.

That's why the things adults say are so important. A critical comment or a harsh word can cut straight to the heart and do damage that takes hours, days, and sometimes years to overcome. At the same time, an encouraging word or a supportive comment can bring hope into a child that fuels change.

We all need a "Samuel encounter" to revolutionize our parenting. Samuel, in search of a king, was taught by God that, "Man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7).

"But it's their behavior that gets them into trouble," you might say. And yes, that's definitely true. But behavior problems start in the heart. So, addressing them there produces more powerful results.

*Bill was fourteen years old. He was disrespectful to his parents, often cutting them off and making sarcastic remarks. Dad and Mom had made several attempts to correct and confront him. They removed video privileges, increased his chores, and grounded him. But the most progress happened when they used a heart-based approach. Here's what they did.*

*Mom and Dad had a meeting with their son. They said, "Bill, we want to have a close relationship with you. We enjoy being with you. But sometimes you treat us unkindly. That compromises our relationship and adds tension.*

*Sometimes you're right when you disagree with us, but by being mean, you cross the line. That line is very important and you'll need to be aware of it in other relationships. If you can work on this with us you'll be more successful, not only in our home now, but also at school, and then in the future when you have a job or your own family."*

*Dad and Mom laid out a plan. It would require practice sessions of interaction around getting common things done at home. They also used the tools of firmness and visioning with their son. A fascinating thing happened that first week. They saw their son start to change. They had connected on a heart level and the combination of tools were having an impact on his reactions. In fact, on Wednesday, after a rather challenging incident he came and sat next to Mom and said, "I crossed the line there didn't I?"*

*Wow! Mom was shocked. Bill's behavior is changing because his heart is changing. Both Mom and Dad are pleased with the progress. They're adding other new strategies and they're thrilled with the results. It wasn't just one meeting with their son or a particular consequence that did the trick. It was a combination of several tools at the same time based on a strategy of change that focused on the heart.*

In the same way that Samuel of the Old Testament experienced a paradigm shift, we too must think differently about our children and grandchildren. We're going to show you how to do just that. But before we do, would you please pray with us. This prayer is one that parents or grandparents can pray to prepare themselves to work with children. Notice how it uses scripture in the prayer, praying that scripture back to God.

## CHANGE

Lord,

I pray for this child you've placed in my care. You know the plans you have for this child, plans to give hope and a future. This child is fearfully and wonderfully made by you with unique gifts and abilities to be used in a powerful way. I pray your blessing on this child that your grace would expand the opportunities for both of us to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with you.

Today Lord I pray that you would give this child a soft heart. I am confident of this, that you have begun a good work in my child and will carry it on to completion. I know you want to use me. Help me know when to be firm and when to offer grace. Give me wisdom that I may lead effectively, to know how to challenge the tough areas and how best to encourage the strengths. Clothe me today with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, so that I can tolerate the imperfections and have the determination to hang in there to overcome resistance.

Lord, I ask that you would bless me and increase my opportunities. Let your hand be with me as I seek to impact this child's heart for you. Walk with me in this day. I humbly dedicate myself to you now as your servant to do your work, in your way, and in your timing. Here I am, Lord, send me. Use me today in the challenges and opportunities I will face.

**Amen.**

Here I am, Lord, send me. Use me today in the challenges and opportunities I will face.

(Inspired from Jeremiah 29:11, Psalm 139:14, Micah 6:8, Philippians 1:6, 2 Chronicles 1:10, Colossians 3:12, 1 Chronicles 4:10, and Isaiah 6:8)

God has given you the awesome privilege and responsibility to impact a life, and as you do, you'll want to do it in the most powerful way possible. That's why we start here by preparing your heart. This is a booklet about tools and strategy, but don't be in a hurry to get down new ideas before you set your own heart to be right with God.

The Bible never says that parents can change the heart of a child. Only two people can make that change. The person themselves can change. The Bible calls that "repentance." And, of course, God can change a person's heart. Continually throughout our program, we rely on God and his grace to bring about the desired results.

Trust in God and work hard at the same time. Both are important. Lose one of those truths and you'll be like a bird flapping only one wing. There are many things you can do as a parent or grandparent to bring about change in a child. We'll guide you through that process to find the best tools that will work in your situation.

We have many practical techniques you'll learn. However, techniques must fit into a strategy. The next chapter will provide you with that strategic approach and it will provide a strong foundation for your plan.

**CHANGE**

## Chapter 2

# Making a Major Shift in Parenting

**I** (Scott) train Biblical Parenting Coaches. Each coach goes through an intensive eight-week preparation, reading, watching videos, and interacting about parenting issues. During that period every coach works with a parent and brings the parent's challenges with one child into our group. Parents too watch videos, fill out reports, and practice new techniques with their child.

We see miracles take place in the lives of children and young people as we work through their parents. Here are just a few of the success stories from recent weeks.

## CHANGE

A 10-year-old with Down Syndrome develops more independence than parents thought possible.

An 8-year-old adopted girl who used foul language and would hit her mom makes huge strides in her ability to cooperate in family life and is now much more calm and responsive.

An angry 14-year-old who blames others learns to take responsibility for his offenses and now responds better to correction.

A 7-year-old girl learns to be less selfish and actually looks for ways to help and add energy to family life instead of draining it.

An out of control 3-year-old learns to follow instructions without a tantrum.

And the list goes on and on.

You pick the problem you'd like to see addressed in your child. We'll show you how to work with that child and see major changes quickly. Many parents consider it a miracle! When parents say, "Wow, I can't believe the change," we get excited. The strategies in this program work. They change children.

**We can help ANY child at ANY age with ANY problem.**

And here's why:

**1) Good theology.** We start with an understanding of how God created people and how he changes them. We then apply those same ideas to the parent/child relationship. We use a multi-faceted approach to change.

**2) Focused period of time.** Parents focus on their parenting for eight weeks. It's amazing what can happen when parents concentrate on family dynamics for that length of time.

**3) New techniques.** Parents learn new tools and practice them with their kids. Parents often need to make some adjustments in the way they work with this child.

**4) Practice sessions.** The home therapy activities change the tendencies in both children and their parents.

**5) Parents track progress.** Each week parents identify successes and challenges that help them chart their progress.

**6) Accountability.** Those who choose to do so, report in and have the accountability of weekly reports and meetings with a Biblical Parenting Coach either in person or on the phone. Other parents get a partner or work with a mate to have regular strategy meetings.

This isn't magic. It's hard work. But many parents see the need to address the challenges they see in their kids. Their current approach isn't working. They want help. They're ready for a change, even one that will cost them time and energy. It's an investment in family life.

Just think. An eight-week investment that will pay off hugely to reduce tension in your home. But more importantly, the work will give your child some life skills to use forever. It's huge!

So let's get started by showing you the biggest change many parents make in their thinking when they enter our program. Just this one idea opens huge windows in a child's heart.

## CHANGE

A common mistake many parents make is to overuse reward and punishment to get kids to do what they want them to do. Just listen to the common statements parents make to their kids.

*“Clean up your toys and you can have a snack.”*

*“Finish your homework and you can go out and play.”*

*“Straighten your room and you can have a friend over.”*

*“If you don’t clean up that mess, you can’t watch TV.”*

*“If you treat me with disrespect, I’m taking your iPad.”*

Reward and punishment often work for the short term, but they have serious side effects. Here’s what’s happening inside the child’s heart. A steady diet of behavior modification like this appeals to the selfishness in a child. It teaches kids to do things to get something in return. In short, kids start asking the wrong questions about life.

*“What’s in it for me?”*

*“Are you going to pay me for that?”*

*“What’s the minimum I need to do to get back to my video game?”*

*“Is the punishment worth it?”*

Many parents have come to that frustrating point where they can’t think of any more reasonable things to do to motivate their kids to action. Parents welcome a revolution in their parenting. They want something new and fresh, especially when they see the results that come from working with our program happen so quickly.

The transition must start in the parent. We know that all parents want to reach the hearts of their kids. The big question then is “how?” What does it mean to use a heart-based approach?

Some parents think that reaching the heart means to talk more to their kids. Others think that it means more physical touch. Still others think that a heart-based approach means being mushy or praying more with their children. All of those things are helpful, but the heart is a complicated place and true heart-work goes much deeper.

In short, the heart is the central processing unit of a person. It's where emotion, beliefs, desires, and convictions come together to produce passion, commitments, and attitudes about life. It's also the place where God has chosen to live, impacting the deepest part of the human control center.

Every child is unique. But each child develops certain patterns of thinking and acting in response to life situations. Many of those patterns need adjusting and parents are in a strategic role to help make that happen. When you work on the heart, the behavior changes.

In reality most children need a multi-faceted approach to change. In fact, you never know exactly what tools are actually going to reach your child and bring about change. That's why it's important to understand good theology and embed parenting strategies into biblical truth. God's Word describes the challenge of using a heart-based approach this way:

**Proverbs 20:5 says,**

*“The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.”*

Even though every child is unique and different, each child has a heart. God is interested in that heart and when parents use a heart-based approach, major changes take place. In fact, the changes are so great that many parents are surprised that so much change could take place so quickly.

## CHANGE

Working with one of our Biblical Parenting Coaches, Karen gave this update:

*“As a single mom, I never seem to be able to get everything done that I want to do. I knew that my three kids could be more helpful and that my twelve-year-old was the key. It was just a few weeks ago that he was so self-focused, always playing with his video game and giving me a hard time about anything I asked him to do. He would be disrespectful to me, cause tension with his brothers, and think only about himself. I’m so grateful for this past eight weeks. Our family is working more as a team than I thought possible. We have a long way to go, but I’m excited to continue on our current path.”*

The solutions that Karen used can improve your family as well. Just imagine the possibilities. Sometimes parents don’t get help because they can’t imagine doing anything else. After all, they are doing the best they can!

We agree that many parents are doing good things. The problem is that the good things they’re doing aren’t working. Parents need a toolbox of strategies, techniques, and ideas, because every child is unique. Each one needs an individualized plan. We will help you develop that plan.

So, what does that plan look like?

Let’s start by helping you understand the map for your child. If you get the map idea then you’ll be able to plot the course for change.

## Chapter 3

# The Map Mentality

**T**hinking about your child's heart is like looking at a map. This approach will give you some immediate direction. A map has a Point A, where you are now, and a Point B, where you want to go. So, let's start by identifying Point A. That's the problem area your child is experiencing now.

Pick a problem you'd like to address in your child. Choose anything. Be bold and adventurous. Dream big. Let's look at making major changes in your child. We're not trying to change a child's personality. Rather, we're going to bring character to balance out the challenges a personality might create. Here's the difference.

## CHANGE

Personality is the God-given unique characteristics of a person. One's personality might be more active or quiet, talkative or contemplative, compliant or liking to be in control. There's nothing wrong with a child's personality.

However, sometimes a child, because of personality strengths and uniqueness, develops tendencies that need balancing. That's where character comes into the picture. We all need character to balance out personality. Maturity is often the process of honing down strengths and weaknesses by building character.

Think about what a character quality is for a moment.

Any character quality is simply a pattern of thinking and acting in response to a challenge.

The person who is patient thinks and acts differently than a person who is impatient. The person who is compassionate thinks and acts differently than a person who is not compassionate.

We'll use both the concepts of personality and character as we help children change on a heart level. Sometimes parents see the weaknesses in their children and become discouraged. Keep in mind that sometimes a weakness is just a character quality being misused. Here are a few examples.

A child who is...      Might also be...

Analytical

Picky, petty, critical

Content

Unmotivated, apathetic, lazy

Creative

Deceptive, manipulative, mischievous

Determined

Hard-headed, stubborn, obstinate

## How to help ANY child with ANY problem at ANY age

Expressive	Talkative, wordy, dominating conversation
Honest	Blunt, brutal, shares too much
Persuasive	Manipulative, pushy, demanding
Sensitive	Touchy, easily offended, moody

That's why every child needs training. If the process is starting to feel complicated because your child's personality or character weaknesses are challenging then go back to your mission and your relationship to the Lord to remind you of the resources you have. With God's grace anything is possible. Do you believe that? If so, then let's apply Philippians 4:13, "I can do all this through him who gives me strength," to your situation starting today. Here's how you'll know what to choose to work on first.

### Step #1 – Identify a Tendency

Pick one of your kids and let's ask this first question to get things started.

"What tendency do I see in my child that makes me feel uncomfortable?"

Tendencies are indications of heart problems. If your child is disrespectful once that may be an accident. If he's disrespectful a second time, that might be a coincidence, but if he's disrespectful a third time, you better start looking at the heart because it appears that a tendency is developing.

## CHANGE

God gives parents an intuitive radar that's sensitive to a child's weaknesses. You'll feel uncomfortable because you know that this current pattern your child has, if not changed, will hinder the child's success. Or, if this current pattern continues, this child is in for some big problems. That parental sensitivity is important because it gives parents an indication of where to work in a child's life. That uncomfortable feeling might reveal itself in you as confusion, frustration, or even anger.

For example, some parents identify these heart issues:

- *My son has a tendency to pick on his sister.*
- *My daughter tends to be self-focused and complains and whines continually.*
- *The anger I see in my child is much greater than the situation warrants.*
- *Every time I ask my son to do something, I get disrespect in return.*
- *My child is failing at school because he won't apply himself.*
- *My son is consumed with electronics.*

Take a moment and on a piece of paper or in a notebook write down one concern you have with your child. With that concern, list a few examples that confirm the problem you are experiencing. One Mom wrote it this way.

*"I know exactly what my son Tyler needs to work on. He has a temper tantrum when things don't go his way. If he doesn't like what I tell him to do, he yells at me or does it with a bad attitude. If his sister takes the remote control, he blows up and yells all kinds of mean things to her. When I tell him it's time to go, if he's involved in his project, he reacts in a disrespectful way."*

Let's step back for a moment and look at what's happening inside Tyler's heart. Tyler has desires. Proverbs 37:4 says, "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart." That passage clearly points out that desires exist in the heart. Secondly, Tyler is experiencing some strong emotions. Verses such as Nehemiah 2:2, Proverbs 12:25, and John 14:1 all reveal that emotions exist in the heart.

Tyler's problem is that he's investing his emotions into his desires so that when he doesn't get what he wants, he reacts. That pattern needs to change. We all know adults who have similar problems. We can help Tyler make changes, but it's not just about adjusting his behavior. We must work on the heart.

Kids want things they can't have or want things a certain way. Those desires, when not met, can provide emotional outbursts. The problems are made worse of course when kids invest emotions into their desires so that now the emotional investment increases the dramatic episodes, further complicating the issues. Thus we have serious heart issues that must be addressed. We helped Tyler's mom know exactly what to do to change this tendency. Tyler made significant improvement in eight weeks. Here's Mom's report.

*"I am so pleased with the changes I see in Tyler. He still is emotional but we're not seeing the extreme reactions we saw just a few weeks ago. He's learning to slow down his emotions and manage himself better. The idea of the Break was hard at first, but now he sees that it's an adult skill and he's more eager to do it on his own. We are continuing to work on this and my role as a coach instead of a critic has helped a lot."*

## CHANGE

Behavioral tendencies in children have from internal challenges. Jesus taught that all kinds of behaviors come from the heart. He said in Matthew 15:18-19, “But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”

In our children we see heart issues erupt in behavior including things such as bad attitudes, disrespect, meanness, resistance, defiance, blaming, and tantrums.

The point is that focusing on behavior change is not enough. Using reward and punishment to adjust behavior is inadequate. A heart-based approach leads to deeper and longer lasting change. It provides children with the tools they need to be successful in life.

So, what tendency would you like to see your child change?

Some parents feel so overwhelmed when they see a child’s weakness that they want to get the child into therapy. They know that this child is in serious trouble and that seeing a counselor might be productive. So, let’s confirm your concern right now.

### **Your Child Needs Therapy**

Every child needs therapy. But you’re the best therapist for your child if you have a plan. We believe that the best counselors for a child are the parents. It’s God’s design. If parents can develop strategies that reach the heart, then their daily interactions become the therapy kids need to overcome those challenges.

Therapy involves practice sessions. If your child couldn't walk, you'd be getting him physical therapy. If your child couldn't talk, you'd be getting him speech therapy. The work we do in the heart involves practice and it strengthens character. We call it character therapy.

As parents, we must focus on the hearts of our children in order to see them overcome their challenges. As you identify a tendency, you are invariably touching a heart issues. And when you start using a heart-based approach you have a whole toolbox of solutions you can use to bring about significant change.

## **Step #2 – Choose the Target Quality**

Many parents make the mistake of focusing on negative behaviors and trying to get rid of them. The result is a lot of negative parenting. “Cut it out.” “Stop it.” “If you keep that up I’m going to...” And it’s all about stopping the negative.

In fact, many parents have in their minds a justice mentality that says, “If you do this then you get that,” both negatively in the form of punishment, and positively in the form of a reward. And unfortunately they miss the heart. That’s back to a behavior modification system that might produce some immediate change but it will hinder long-term growth.

What you want is an adjustment in the child’s heart. God uses a term in his Word to describe this. It’s called repentance. Repentance can be defined biblically as “a change of heart.” It’s not just stopping a negative behavior but it’s a 180-degree turn replacing the negative with the right thing. And in the center of this strategic theological idea, we discover our next parenting step: Choose the target quality.

## CHANGE

Instead of investing your attention on what your child is doing wrong, ask yourself, “Where do we want to go?” or “What heart quality does my child need to develop in order to overcome this weakness?” The child with anger episodes needs to develop self-control. The child who is mean, needs to develop kindness. The child who reacts during transitions needs to develop flexibility.

This one step alone makes parenting more positive. Instead of focusing on what you want to get rid of, you’re now looking toward the goal. With this approach you’ll now help your child develop life skills to face those challenges forever.

Remember that a character quality is a pattern of thinking and acting in response to a challenge. Once you have identified the positive heart quality then you can go to work to help the child learn to think and act differently.

“But what if my child isn’t willing to change?”

That’s a great question. We have lots of tools for change that a parent can use. It’s always helpful when the child is eager to change and some of the tools focus on the child’s desire. However, change isn’t totally dependent on a child’s receptivity. Some kids resist change, but other parenting tools help a child change whether he wants to or not. Strategic persistence can overcome that resistance.

When kids have major problems, some parents immediately think of giving big consequences. “That will do the trick,” they think. Although consequences may be a good motivation, parents can use a number of other tools to bring about change. Some children are, or become, more responsive than others. But we’ll even help the child who doesn’t want to change. After all, that’s what God does with us.

Even people in the Bible resisted God's leadership and he helped them change their minds to overcome their resistance. Take Jonah for example. He was resistant when God told him to do something he didn't want to do. He needed a little persuasion. Then he went and did it. Jonah needed to change his heart and God helped him do that.

There are a lot of ways to help children change. It reminds me (Scott) of the plumber that came to my house to clean out a drain. He started with a small tool to stick into the drain to remove the clog. But that didn't work. So he went out to his van to get another bigger tool that hand cranked a wire down my drain. But when that didn't work, I started to get concerned. So, I asked him, "What if that doesn't work?" His reply to me is the same one I say to parents who are concerned that their current strategy isn't working with their child and ask the same question. Here's the plumber's answer:

"If this doesn't work, I always have something else that will."

I laughed and watched as he brought in this huge motorized tool that he stuck in my drain. He turned it on and let it work and in just a few minutes my water was flowing again.

Don't get discouraged because the things you're doing aren't working. They might even be good things. They might work with the neighbor's kids. They might even work with other kids in your family or they might have worked with you when you were a kid. The fact is, this child may need a different approach. There are lots of strategies and ideas that work. That's why you'll often need a multi-faceted approach. And, it's why you might want to try some different techniques. Parents are often amazed at the results.

## CHANGE

But before we can get to the actual tools, we must have a way to make your plan measurable. After all, you want to know if you're making progress. So read on in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4

# The Arena

**T**hinking about your child's heart is like looking at a map. This approach will give you some immediate direction. A map has a Point A, where you are now, and a Point B, where you want to go. So, let's start by identifying Point A. That's the problem area your child is experiencing now.

Pick a problem you'd like to address in your child. Choose anything. Be bold and adventurous. Dream big. Let's look at making major changes in your child. We're not trying to change a child's personality. Rather, we're going to bring character to balance out the challenges a personality might create. Here's the difference.

## CHANGE

It will also be the place where you'll begin to implement change and practice new patterns. Don't think of physical places such as "home" or "school." Think in terms of the heart. When is your child tempted to act out with the negative tendency? For example:

Shanna, age five, gets angry. When we ask the parents what the arena is, they say, "All the time." Although that might be true, we need more specific information in order to develop a plan. As we listen to the parents describe Shanna's challenges we learn that she gets angry when given an instruction that she doesn't want to do, reacts when corrected, and explodes when she receives a "no" answer. That gives us three arenas. There are likely more, but at least we can start with one of those.

We chose one arena to work on first: responding well to instructions. As we work on that one arena we'll see change take place in the heart. We may have to move to other arenas over time, but sometimes the responsiveness of working on one arena affects the others as well.

Here's what's happening on a heart level. Shanna lacks the ability to give up her agenda when she's told to do something. She has her own ideas, expectations, and plans, and Mom's instructions get in the way.

Dad and Mom determined that their daughter needed to develop cooperation. That was the target quality and the arena was when given an instruction. In Shanna's heart there is an arena where she's tempted to react, act out, or resist that instruction. Imagine a boxing ring inside of a child's heart. We have two boxers. The first is the temptation on one side of the boxing ring. The other is the plan to fight that temptation.

Why is the child having such a problem in life? Because the temptation exists without a plan to address it. Every child needs a plan to address negative tendencies in the heart.

Shanna needs a personalized, individual plan to address the arena of following instructions that she doesn't want to do. Presently the temptation to erupt with anger is winning because she doesn't have a plan that works for her. As parents help Shanna develop that plan and practice it, Shanna will change and increase the necessary character to manage herself in that arena.

Does she have to want to change? No, not exactly. But she will change because the plan will help her want to change whether she wants to now or not. You see, one of the tools is firmness. It's not the only one, but the new structure required of a child often produces a change in the tendency. There are many other tools. We just don't want you to falsely believe that this process is all about dialogue with your child or that somehow you're convincing your child to make the change through discussion. Sometimes it is, but kids change when parents use a multi-faceted heart-based approach.

An arena makes the plan measurable. Remember, we want to see change in eight weeks. If we're too general, then we won't know if we're making progress. Furthermore, the arena gives the parent a specific time and place to work on practice sessions.

It's going to take work but a direct focus on an arena in a child's life can bring about a miracle. We don't use that word "miracle" lightly. A miracle is an unexpected, unnatural event, often prompted by God's direction. Parents often look back on their eight weeks of work and say, "I wouldn't have imagined that we could make this much progress in such a short amount of time." They're often surprised with the reduced tension, heightened cooperation, and better

## CHANGE

cooperation, and better working relationship. It's that reaction that we view as a miracle.

### **This is big. Notice what we've done so far.**

- We identified the tendency a child has. This draws attention to a problem.
- We identified a target heart-quality that will move the child in the right direction.
- We've identified an arena where the heart-quality will be worked out in order to meet the challenge in the child's heart.

Now let's plot these things on the map. Parents find the map mentality encouraging because it provides a clearer picture of where they are and where they need to go.

Just this one idea often changes the attitude of many parents. Now, instead of focusing on a behavior to get rid of, you're focusing on a life skill to develop. Drawing attention to the positive heart quality helps you move from punishment to discipline. That distinction is significant in a heart-based approach.

- *Punishment focuses on past problems. Discipline focuses on future success.*
- *Punishment is often motivated out of anger. Discipline is motivated out of love.*
- *Punishment seeks justice. Discipline means to teach.*
- *Punishment is negative. Discipline is positive.*

The parent's positive stance now gives a new perspective to the daily interaction. Viewing your child's heart on a map means that your child is currently at point A and needs to move to Point B. The parent identifies the heart quality at Point B and then coaches, teaches, and requires that a child make progress toward that goal.

Some parents see the map mentality as a contrast to what they are doing presently. We often see parents using a justice mentality that says, “You did this, so you get that.” On the positive side, they are trying to reward their kids for positive behavior and on the negative side, they threaten or punish. This approach to parenting is weak. Although you may get a fast response from a child by giving a reward or punishment, it rarely lasts. Kids want the rewards and are less focused on doing what’s right. It doesn’t take long to see that children who are raised with a justice mentality end up mistreating their parents or they try to bargain with them over even the most basic things.

Caden is eight years old and has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. His mom and dad want to do what’s right but they’re puzzled, confused, and often frustrated by their son’s lack of impulse control and high energy.

As is often the case, the reward/punishment suggestions they received from books and counselors weren’t working. Here’s why. Using external motivation for kids who are highly internally motivated rarely works. Caden is already internally motivated. He’s driven with strong desires. Using reward or punishment might work for the short term, but it doesn’t usually bring about long-term change.

Caden’s parents came to us for help. In the first week we saw hopeful changes and in eight weeks Caden had developed character that was helping him manage his impulses. Here’s how we helped this family.

## CHANGE

ADHD is a biological problem. The electro-chemical transmissions in the brain aren't functioning fluently so kids often have a hard time focusing or controlling impulses. Furthermore the "hyperactivity" component means that the brain is issuing messages to the muscles in the body to move in order to relax. Kids with ADHD need a multi-faceted solution. Using practice sessions and training, we used a number of tools. We help these children strengthen their consciences, providing internal messages to increase executive functioning.

We also helped Caden develop "others thinking" to become more sensitive to how his actions affect those around him. Then we helped him develop more self-control using practice sessions and by creating more structure in the relational routines that involve giving instructions and correction. We targeted Caden's heart by increasing his character to match the biological urges he experienced.

Major changes took place as Mom and Dad practiced intently with their son. Caden is still active, but he's much more pleasant to be around. His heart is more sensitive and he is growing in his ability to manage his behavior. In fact, his school teacher said, "I see you put Caden on medication." The same changes she saw in Caden were typical of other children who used medication to address the issues.

We're not opposed to medication. All we're saying is that we find it helpful to try other solutions. Often when parents use a heart-based approach kids change so much that they get off medication or don't need it. You'll have to make that important decision with your doctor. Don't rush it. Just work on character and see what happens.

The point is, we can help any child at any age with any problem change. When you target your parenting using strategy and heart-based tools that change takes place.

## Chapter 5

# Next Steps

**S**o far, we helped you plot your child and the challenges on a map. It's a heart map that helps you know where you are and where you need to go. But you don't yet have the directions that will get you there. We call the next step "The Plan." It's like the directions that take you from Point A on the map to Point B. Here are some things that you'll use in this next step.

## CHANGE

As you develop The Plan, you'll learn...

- *how having a strategy can help you move away from reactive parenting. That's why many dads like our program. They like strategy.*
- *specific techniques to move your child from Point A to Point B.*
- *how to overcome resistance and move forward with the plan even if your child doesn't want to.*
- *how to build character in a way that will help you get things done in family life easier (instructions) and get kids back on track when needed (correction).*
- *an effective way to communicate all of this to the child in a way that often creates a partnership relationship for change to take place.*
- *how to transfer responsibility to the child for a change of heart.*
- *ways to address emotional episodes that seem to get in the way of progress.*
- *how to turn your relationship with your child into that of a coach instead of a policeman.*
- *new skills to parent children of any age according to their developmental abilities.*
- *approaches that help get both parents on the same page, realizing that dads always do it differently than moms.*
- *more tools to work with your child to reach the heart.*

It's these and more topics that are answered in the eight-week Biblical Parenting Coaching Program. It's like a Bible study, mixed with theology lessons, coupled with down to earth techniques to use with your kids.

For some, the development of a plan is a complete parenting makeover. For others, it affirms techniques they are already using and shows how they fit into a bigger heart-based strategy. The new plan to move your child from Point A to Point B often requires that you learn new skills, practice new techniques, and modify the way you work with your kids. But it always requires practice.

Some parents find it challenging to have the time to advance their parenting. That's why we've created an eight-week program to bring about major change. Yes, it's still an investment of time and energy for two months of your life. It's a lot of work, but more and more parents are willing to back off their busy lifestyles for a concentrated period of time as an investment in their child.

**Miriam, a mother of six kids said it this way:**

*"I've been to parenting seminars before from other speakers. I've read lots of parenting books from various authors. This stuff works. I've seen it in my own family. I'm sold on this approach by Turansky and Miller and I'm encouraged by its biblical basis. I feel like my parenting is grounded in my faith like never before. If you can get into this program, I encourage you to do it.*

Life is busy. Not only is it complicated with work, chores, and other tasks, but kids have a lot of opportunities. School, sports, hobbies, and activities all provide good influences in children's lives. Unfortunately, sometimes family life starts to morph into something that seems unsatisfying and even unhealthy.

While trying to give kids the best by getting them involved in so many good things, the family itself sometimes weakens. Tension may increase, bad attitudes crop up, and relationships often become strained. It's at that point that some intentional work on character

## CHANGE

and family dynamics becomes imperative. Of course, any family would benefit from strengthening itself, but those under pressure recognize the need even more.

The good news is that if you're willing to dedicate the time, then we've streamlined the process. Just imagine a healthier family in eight weeks. Less tension, more direction, and closer relationships.

This program brings hope. Just look at your own situation and what's happened in you as you've read this book. You're already experiencing hope. Why? Because the solutions are biblical, practical, and ring true in your own heart. This program works because it changes children from the inside out and puts parents in an excellent place to influence that change. It's all about strategy.

Parents need tools for the journey. All parents want to reach the hearts of their kids. They even know what the problems are. They just don't know how to get from Point A to Point B in the most efficient and effective way. Anger and ineffective strategies often increase tension and weaken a parent's effectiveness.

Parents find the Biblical Parenting Coaching Program to be encouraging and hopeful. It provides new strategies, ideas, and techniques that inspire hope. It's practical, helping you know exactly what you need to do to bring about change in ANY child, at ANY age, with ANY problem. It brings new vision to your parenting and helps your family significantly.

The Biblical Parenting Coaching Program teaches you an approach to parenting that maximizes change. You'll use the process over and over again with each of your children. God wants to empower families with his grace. It starts with a willing parent.

Here's what the Biblical Parenting Coaching Program involves. Once you sign up, you'll have access to a web-based Parent Portal where you'll watch weekly videos of teaching by Dr. Scott Turansky. You'll download worksheets and fill out weekly journal reports. You'll have suggested reading from four books from the National Center for Biblical Parenting. Each week has a different focus that helps you create the plan, develop the skills, and work them into family life with your child. Each week you'll have practice sessions with your child, work on character development, and track progress.

This independent study program is web based that you can do at your own pace. Right away in Week 1 you'll be working on new techniques with your child. At the same time, you'll be learning new approaches, why they work, and how to present them wisely to your child.

You also have the option of meeting with a Biblical Parenting Coach to give you further input and guide your progress. You'll meet several times during the program on the phone or in person with that coach. The additional wisdom and accountability helps parents get the most out of the program. Each coach has been trained by Dr. Scott Turansky.

You can learn more about your options at [biblicalparenting.org/coach](http://biblicalparenting.org/coach)

Either way, you'll find practical, hands on advice that you can use now. We trust that this book has been helpful in and of itself and that it may whet your appetite for more. At the National Center for Biblical Parenting we are committed to providing biblical, practical solutions that parents can use now.

## CHANGE

We know that parenting is the toughest job in the world. It's our goal to make it a little easier.

*Blessings,*

Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN



For more resources for your parenting visit [biblicalparenting.org](http://biblicalparenting.org)

# CHANGE

## Helping ANY child at ANY age with ANY problem

Dr. Scott Turansky is an adjunct professor at Concordia University, training masters level students who are working toward their Family Life Education degree. He also trains coaches for the National Center for Biblical Parenting. "We see miracles in the lives of families in eight weeks." Parents learn new tools, practice new routines with the child, pray a lot, and receive accountability and advice from the coach.



Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN are the founders of the National Center for Biblical Parenting. They've trained over 150 presenters to teach live parenting seminars and train Biblical Parenting Coaches to work one-on one with families, They also have four video training programs churches use in small groups. Whatever format you choose, you'll learn biblical, practical tools that focus on a child's heart.



Learn more at [biblicalparenting.org/coach](https://biblicalparenting.org/coach)