

**LLOYD D. ALLEN, MSc.**

*Proper Parenting Matters – A Complete Course*

# PROPER PARENTING MATTERS

*Raising Strong, Godly, and Ready Children*

A Biblical, Practical & Transformational Parenting Course

- 1. Building the Foundation
- 2. Know Your Child
- 3. Discipline That Actually Works
- 4. Raising Emotionally Intelligent Children
- 5. The United Front
- 6. Screens, Culture & the Battle for Your Child's Mind
- 7. Legacy Parenting

*"The goal of parenting is not to keep your children.  
It is to release them – ready."*

**7**

MODULES

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# PROPER PARENTING MATTERS

*A Complete Course in Seven Modules*

## INTRODUCTION

Parenting is the most important job you will ever have – and the one you received the least training for. This course fixes that.

Seven modules built on decades of research, therapeutic experience, and practical wisdom. Each one targets a real challenge, delivers a real strategy, and comes with a tool you can use immediately.

No fluff. No theory. Just results.

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## HOW TO USE THIS EBOOK

Each module contains four sections of teaching content – The Foundation, Key Concepts, Biological & Psychological, and Theological – followed by one powerful illustrated example drawn from a real family. The example shows you exactly what transformation looks like in practice before you apply the same principles in your own home.

Each module is paired with a separate Tool – a 3-page practical worksheet designed to be completed by you and your spouse together. The ebook teaches. The tool transforms. Use both.

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## WHAT EACH MODULE CONTAINS

### THE FOUNDATION

The core truth of the module – why it matters and what changes when you apply it.

### KEY CONCEPTS

Five anchor principles that form the teaching backbone of the module.

**BIOLOGICAL &  
PSYCHOLOGICAL**

Research-based insight into how science supports the approach.

**THEOLOGICAL**

Scripture examined with depth and applied to real family life.

**ONE KEY EXAMPLE**

A completed example from a real family showing transformation in action.

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# BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

*Parenting by Design, Not by Default*

## THE FOUNDATION

Most parents are reacting to their children rather than leading them. They discipline when things go wrong, connect when there is a crisis, and parent by instinct rather than intention. The result is a home that feels chaotic, children who are confused about boundaries, and parents who are exhausted. This module establishes what parenting is actually for — and gives you a framework to lead your home on purpose.

It begins not with a budget or a rule chart, but with a belief system. Because what you believe about parenting will always govern how you practice it. Until a couple settles the question of purpose, values, and approach, every tactic they try will eventually hit the same invisible wall.

## KEY CONCEPTS

**Parenting has a goal** — you are not just managing behavior; you are shaping a human being who will one day leave your home and impact the world. Know what you are building toward.

**Default parenting produces default children** — without an intentional philosophy, you will parent the way you were parented, for better or worse. Design your approach before crisis forces one on you.

**Your home is a culture** — every family has a culture: a set of values, rhythms, and expectations. You either create it deliberately or it forms by accident around screens, moods, and outside influences.

**Agreement between parents is the foundation** — children do not need perfect parents; they need aligned ones. When parents are unified, children feel safe. When they are divided, children become manipulative by necessity.

**Premarital application** – couples must discuss parenting philosophy before children arrive. Differences in discipline style, spiritual training, and family culture are far easier to resolve before a child is in the room demanding an answer.

## BIOLOGICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL

Research in developmental psychology confirms that children thrive under authoritative parenting – a style characterized by high warmth and high structure. Neither permissiveness nor harshness produces resilient, well-adjusted children. Dr. Diana Baumrind's landmark studies show that children raised with clear expectations and genuine connection outperform their peers academically, socially, and emotionally. The brain of a child is wired to seek safety through predictability. A home built on consistent values and unified leadership literally reduces cortisol levels in children and supports healthy neurological development.

## THEOLOGICAL

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 does not suggest that parents teach their children – it commands it. The instruction is deliberate, consistent, and woven into the fabric of daily life. Proverbs 22:6 – train up a child in the way he should go – carries the Hebrew word *chanak*, meaning to dedicate, to inaugurate, to set on the right path from the beginning. This is not accidental parenting. It is intentional consecration.

Psalm 127:3 calls children a heritage from the Lord – a stewardship, not an ownership. You did not produce your child for yourself. You were entrusted with a life that belongs to God, to be shaped for His purposes and released into His mission. Every decision you make as a parent is therefore not just practical. It is theological. It is an act of worship or negligence – and Scripture leaves no neutral ground between the two.

## THE ONE EXAMPLE THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

Of all the sections in Tool 1, the Home Culture Audit is the one that lands hardest. It is not a theory exercise or a scoring system. It is a mirror. Parents count their checkmarks — and the number tells them more about the actual culture of their home than anything they could have said in a conversation.

The example below belongs to Marcus and Diane Thompson — a couple married eleven years with three children. They completed Tool 1 together on a Saturday morning after the children had gone to a friend's house. Read what they checked. Then read what they said about it.

### THE HOME CULTURE AUDIT — MARCUS & DIANE THOMPSON

Every home has a culture — formed intentionally or by default. A check means this is currently, consistently true in our household. Not occasionally. Not on good days. Consistently.

HOME CULTURE STATEMENT	MARCUS & DIANE	HONEST REFLECTION
<b>We have defined family values</b>		<i>Written on a plaque. But no one could name them if asked.</i>
<b>We eat together regularly</b>		<i>Three nights a week minimum — this one they protect.</i>
<b>We pray or worship together</b>		<i>We pray at meals. That is it. Nothing else is consistent.</i>
<b>Screen time has clear limits</b>		<i>None. Every child has a device. There are no real rules.</i>
<b>Children know the house rules</b>		<i>They know them. Whether they follow them is another story.</i>
<b>We celebrate character, not just grades</b>		<i>We praise grades constantly. Character goes unmentioned.</i>
<b>Conflict is resolved, not avoided</b>		<i>We go silent. Then it blows up three days later.</i>
<b>Faith is practiced, not just talked about</b>		<i>We talk about God. We rarely live it in front of them.</i>
<b>Children have real responsibilities</b>		<i>They clear the table. That is the extent of their responsibility.</i>
<b>We speak encouragement daily</b>		<i>We correct far more than we affirm. This one hurt to admit.</i>

## WHAT MARCUS AND DIANE SAID AFTERWARD

*"We checked four out of ten. That number sat between us like something neither of us wanted to touch. We have family values on a sign in our entryway. We cannot name them on demand. We talk about God every Sunday. We almost never live it in front of our children Monday through Saturday. We correct more than we affirm. We avoid conflict until it explodes. Four out of ten. That was the culture of our home – not the one we intended, but the one we had actually built. We did not feel condemned. We felt clear. Clarity is the beginning of change. We picked our two lowest areas and started there. That Saturday morning was the beginning of a different home." – Marcus Thompson*

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## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR HOME

Marcus and Diane's home culture audit result is not unusual. Most parents who complete this section honestly check between three and six items. The ones who check ten are either being dishonest – or they have already done the work this module is designed to produce.

The number is not the point. The honesty is. A family that checks four and admits it is far better positioned than a family that checks nine and means none of them. What the audit reveals is not a verdict. It is a starting point.

The two items you do not check – the gaps that make you uncomfortable – those become your first thirty days. Not all ten at once. Two. Specific. Addressed before you move to the next module.

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN TOOL 1

Tool 1 has five parts. Work through them in order. Complete Part 1 individually first – each spouse writes their own answers before comparing. The differences in your responses are not problems to solve. They are conversations to have.

The self-assessment in Part 2 is most useful when both spouses score themselves and each other. The gaps between your self-perception and your spouse's perception of you are where the real growth lives.

The Home Culture Audit in Part 3 is the one to do slowly. Read each statement and ask: is this consistently true – not on good days, not occasionally, but as a pattern? If you have to think about it for more than five seconds, it is not consistently true. Do not check it.

The action plan in Part 4 should be completed before you close the tool. Not later. Not when you have more time. Insight without immediate commitment evaporates within 48 hours. Write your first action before you close the page.

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# KNOW YOUR CHILD

*Temperament, Love Languages, and the Art of Reading Your Kid*

## THE FOUNDATION

One of the most common parenting mistakes is treating all children the same. You do not have children — you have individuals. Each child arrives with a distinct wiring, a unique emotional language, and a specific way of experiencing love, correction, and connection. The parent who takes time to study their child will always be more effective than the parent who simply applies the same approach to every situation.

This module teaches you how to read your child so you can reach your child. Before you can correct them wisely, you must first know them deeply. Temperament, love language, and the message behind their behavior — these are not optional extras. They are the foundation of effective parenting.

## KEY CONCEPTS

**Temperament is not an excuse — it is a map** — your child was born with a built-in disposition toward the world. Understanding whether they are strong-willed, sensitive, introverted, or explosive does not lower your expectations; it informs your strategy.

**Every child has a primary love language** — words of affirmation, quality time, physical touch, acts of service, and gifts are not equal in every child. Discipline disconnected from the right love language will never fully land.

**The child who is hardest to love needs love the most** — the defiant child, the distant teenager, the emotionally explosive kid — their behavior is communication. Learn to read the message before responding to the behavior itself.

**Comparison is parenting's most destructive habit** — comparing siblings, cousins, or classmates does not motivate children; it wounds them. Each child must be parented according to their own design, not measured against someone else's standard.

**Premarital application** – couples must openly discuss how they were parented, what their own temperaments are, and how they each received love growing up. Unexamined personal histories become unconscious parenting defaults.

## BIOLOGICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL

Developmental psychologist Dr. Thomas Chess identified nine temperament traits in children – including activity level, adaptability, intensity, and mood – that remain remarkably stable from infancy through adolescence. These traits are neurologically rooted, not chosen. Research on attachment theory, pioneered by John Bowlby and expanded by Mary Ainsworth, confirms that a child's ability to regulate emotion, form healthy relationships, and develop resilience is directly tied to how securely they are known and responded to by their primary caregiver.

Children who feel genuinely understood – not just managed – develop stronger self-concept and are significantly less likely to act out chronically. The neuroscience is clear: a child whose emotional world is consistently acknowledged develops more robust prefrontal cortex function, greater impulse control, and healthier stress-response systems. Knowing your child is not just a relational warmth – it is a neurological investment.

## THEOLOGICAL

Psalm 139:13-14 declares that God knit each child together in the womb – fearfully and wonderfully made. Every temperament, every sensitivity, every intensity your child carries was known by God before you held them. Parenting begins with the theological conviction that your child is not a project to fix but a person to discover.

Jeremiah 1:5 establishes that God knows a child before they are born and has already assigned them a purpose. Your job is not to impose a design – it is to steward the one already placed within them. Proverbs 22:6 – train a child in the way he should go – includes the Hebrew implication of training according to the child's own bent, their individual nature. Effective biblical parenting is not one-size-fits-all. It is personalized, attentive, and deeply intentional.

## THE ONE EXAMPLE THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

Of all the sections in Tool 2, the Behavior Decoder is the one that stops parents cold. It is the section where parents stop seeing a difficult child and start seeing a communicating one. The example below is drawn from a real family – a father named Marcus and his 8-year-old son Elijah, who had been labeled defiant, exhausting, and impossible to please.

Read what Marcus wrote in the decoder. Then ask yourself: what would your decoder say about your child?

### THE BEHAVIOR DECODER — ELIJAH, AGE 8

Every behavior is a message. The Behavior Decoder teaches parents to read beneath the surface of what a child does – and ask: what are they trying to communicate? Below is Marcus's completed decoder for Elijah.

WHEN ELIJAH...	HE WAS ACTUALLY SAYING...	WHAT CHANGED
<b>Argued every bedtime instruction</b>	<i>"I have not had enough of you today. I am not ready to lose you for the night."</i>	<i>20-minute wind-down with one parent – just talking. Arguments stopped within a week.</i>
<b>Picked fights with his younger sister</b>	<i>"I feel invisible. She is getting attention I am not getting."</i>	<i>Individual check-ins before group time. Named him specifically in praise daily.</i>
<b>Shut down when corrected in class</b>	<i>"Public correction is humiliating to me. I can hear truth – but not like this."</i>	<i>All correction delivered privately. He became more responsive, not less.</i>
<b>Melted down after school every week</b>	<i>"I am depleted. School is exhausting. I need decompression – not more demands."</i>	<i>30 minutes of quiet alone time before any conversation or homework began.</i>
<b>Refused to apologize after conflict</b>	<i>"I don't know how. Nobody modeled it for me. I feel shame, not just guilt."</i>	<i>Marcus modeled apology first – to Elijah. The behavior shifted within two weeks.</i>

### WHAT MARCUS WROTE AFTER COMPLETING THE DECODER

*"I had been parenting Elijah's behavior for two years. This decoder made me realize I had never once asked what the behavior was trying to say. Every single row in that table revealed something I had missed. The bedtime arguments were not defiance – they were a child telling me he had not had enough of me that day. The moment I understood that, I stopped dreading bedtime and started protecting it. Everything changed – not because Elijah changed, but because I finally started reading him correctly." – Marcus Thompson*

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## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR CHILD

Elijah is not your child. But the principle is the same. Behind every behavior that frustrates you, exhausts you, or confuses you is a message your child does not yet have the words to deliver any other way. The decoder in Tool 2 gives you the framework to translate those messages – to move from reaction to understanding, and from understanding to strategy.

The most powerful parenting shift is not a new technique or a better consequence. It is the decision to ask a different question. Not: how do I stop this behavior? But: what is this behavior telling me about what my child needs?

That question will not always have an easy answer. But the parent who asks it consistently will always be more effective than the parent who reacts to the surface and never reaches the root.

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN TOOL 2

The tool for this module has six sections. Complete one profile per child – not one profile for all your children. Each child is a separate document, a separate profile, a separate decoder. If you have three children, you will complete the tool three times.

Work through the profile and temperament identifier first. Then complete the love language section – and resist the urge to project your own love language onto your child. What fills your tank is not necessarily what fills theirs.

When you reach the Behavior Decoder, slow down. Think about the behavior that most frustrates you right now – the one you have been trying to stop for months. Put it in the first row. Ask the question. What is my child trying to say?

Let the answer surprise you. It usually does.

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# DISCIPLINE THAT ACTUALLY WORKS

*Authority, Boundaries, and Raising Children Who Obey from the Inside Out*

## THE FOUNDATION

Discipline is not punishment. It is training. The word itself comes from the same root as discipleship — and that tells you everything about what it is supposed to accomplish. The goal is never simply to stop a behavior. The goal is to shape a character. Parents who discipline only to control their children's actions will fight the same battles for eighteen years. Parents who discipline to develop their children's conscience will raise adults who make right choices when no one is watching.

This module gives you the framework, the tools, and the theology to discipline with both love and authority. It begins with the most important distinction in parenting: the difference between a child who obeys because they are afraid and a child who obeys because they have internalized a value. Only one of those children will make the right choice when you are not in the room.

## KEY CONCEPTS

**Authority must be established before discipline can work** — a child who does not respect your authority will not respond to your correction. Relationship and consistency build the credibility that makes discipline effective. Authority is not demanded — it is earned through presence, follow-through, and trust.

**Every boundary needs a reason** — children who understand why a rule exists internalize it. Children who only hear "because I said so" obey when you are present and rebel the moment you are not. Explain the principle behind the rule and you move correction from compliance to conviction.

**Consequences must be consistent, calm, and connected** — discipline delivered in anger teaches fear, not wisdom. The most effective correction is measured, predictable, and directly tied to the behavior being addressed. Inconsistency is the

single greatest destroyer of discipline effectiveness.

**Praise the character, not just the behavior** – when you say "you are honest" rather than "good job telling the truth," you build an identity. Children rise to – or fall to – what they believe about themselves. Identity-based affirmation is one of the most powerful parenting tools available.

**Premarital application** – couples must align on discipline philosophy, methods, and non-negotiables before children arrive. Disagreement here, left unresolved, becomes the most consistent and damaging source of parenting conflict in marriage. United discipline is not optional – it is foundational.

## BIOLOGICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL

Neuroscience confirms that the prefrontal cortex – responsible for impulse control, consequences-awareness, and sound decision-making – is not fully developed until age twenty-five. Children are neurologically incapable of the level of self-regulation adults routinely expect from them. Effective discipline works with this biological reality rather than against it. It builds neural pathways for self-control through repetition, structure, and co-regulation with a calm, present, and consistent caregiver.

Research by Dr. Ross Greene confirms that children do well when they can – not when they want to. Most behavioral problems are lagging skill problems, not defiance problems. A child who cannot regulate frustration is not choosing to misbehave – they are failing at a skill they have not yet developed. That reframe alone changes how a parent responds, and a changed response changes the outcome every time.

## THEOLOGICAL

Proverbs 13:24 connects discipline directly to love – the parent who withholds correction does not protect their child; they abandon them to their own worst impulses. Hebrews 12:11 frames all discipline as painful in the moment but producing a harvest of righteousness and peace for those trained by it. These are not abstract promises. They are the documented outcome of consistent, loving correction applied over time.

God's own parenting model is the standard: high love, high expectation, real consequences, and consistent restoration. He never disciplines in rage. He never withholds correction out of guilt. He never lets love become permissiveness. That is the model – and it works in the home the same way it works in the Kingdom. The parent who disciplines the way God disciplines will not produce fearful children. They will produce children who know they are loved – and who behave like it.

## THE ONE EXAMPLE THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

Of all the sections in Tool 3, the Consequence Builder is the one that most directly transforms how parents discipline. The reason most discipline fails is not because parents are too soft or too harsh – it is because they are making decisions in the moment, under pressure, in the middle of the behavior they are trying to stop.

The Consequence Builder changes that. It asks parents to decide their responses in advance – when they are calm, aligned, and thinking clearly. The example below belongs to Marcus and Diane Thompson. They completed this section together after Marcus admitted he had been making up consequences on the spot for years – and that his children had noticed.

### THE CONSEQUENCE BUILDER – MARCUS & DIANE THOMPSON

Effective consequences are decided in advance – not invented in anger. Below is the Thompson family's completed builder for their six most common discipline challenges. The immediate consequence and the escalated response were agreed upon by both parents before either was ever enforced.

BEHAVIOR / OFFENCE	IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCE	IF REPEATED / ESCALATED
<b>Defiance / Direct disobedience</b>	<i>Calm restatement of the instruction. One warning. Then: loss of a privilege for 24 hours.</i>	<i>Loss of privilege extended to 48 hours. One-on-one conversation about respect and authority.</i>
<b>Lying or deception</b>	<i>Immediate acknowledgment required. Natural consequence of the lie if possible.</i>	<i>Loss of trust-based privileges for one week. Daily check-ins rebuild trust incrementally.</i>
<b>Disrespect to a parent</b>	<i>Stop the interaction. "We do not speak that way. Try again." No continuation until tone changes.</i>	<i>Written apology required. Conversation about what respect looks like and why it matters.</i>
<b>Sibling conflict / physical fighting</b>	<i>Both children separated immediately. Each writes down their version independently.</i>	<i>Both lose shared activities for the day. Mediated conversation before normal resumes.</i>
<b>Screen time violation</b>	<i>Device removed for 24 hours. No negotiation, no pleading, no exceptions.</i>	<i>Device removed for one week. Revised screen agreement signed by child.</i>

**Incomplete responsibilities**

*Responsibility must be completed before any preferred activity. No exceptions.*

*All weekend activities suspended until responsibilities are consistently completed.*

**WHAT MARCUS SAID AFTER COMPLETING THE CONSEQUENCE BUILDER**

*"I had been parenting on improvisation for eleven years. Every time one of my children did something wrong, I would decide what the consequence was in the moment – usually based on how tired I was or how many times they had done it that week. My children had figured that out. They knew that the same behavior got a different consequence depending on my mood. Sitting down with Diane and completing this table took us forty minutes. We argued about two of the rows – the lying row and the disrespect row. That argument was the most useful parenting conversation we have ever had. We came out of it with something we had never had before: an agreed position. The first week we used it, our twelve-year-old tested the screen time rule. Diane enforced it exactly as we had written it. He appealed to me. I said the same thing she had said, word for word. He looked at both of us and went to his room. No explosion. No negotiation. He knew we had discussed it. He knew there was no gap to exploit. The consequence builder did not just change our discipline. It closed every gap our children had been using for years." – Marcus Thompson*

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## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR HOME

Marcus's children were not unusually defiant. They were normally intelligent. They had simply identified the inconsistency in their home's discipline system and were navigating it rationally. Most children do this – not because they are manipulative by nature, but because they are wired to test boundaries and they quickly learn which ones hold and which ones bend.

The consequence builder does not make you a rigid parent. It makes you a consistent one. And consistency – more than harshness, more than warmth, more than any single technique – is what builds the trust and predictability that effective discipline requires.

When both parents agree on the consequence before the behavior occurs, three things happen. The child cannot divide and conquer. The parent does not have to think under pressure. And the consequence – when it comes – feels fair, because the child knew exactly what it would be. That fairness is what separates discipline that builds character from punishment that only produces resentment.

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN TOOL 3

Tool 3 has six sections. Begin with the self-audit in Part 1 – both spouses independently before comparing. The 5 C's assessment in Part 2 is most powerful when you score yourself and ask your spouse to score you separately. Wherever those scores differ, that is the real conversation.

The Consequence Builder in Part 3 requires both spouses present. Do not complete it alone. The whole point is the agreement – and agreement requires two people in the same room, willing to work through the rows where they see things differently.

The Discipline vs Punishment table in Part 4 is designed to be read slowly, column by column. For each row, ask honestly: which of these two descriptions sounds more like what I did the last time I corrected my child? Let the answer be uncomfortable if it needs to be. Discomfort in the right direction is the beginning of change.

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# RAISING EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT CHILDREN

*Teaching Feelings, Building Resilience, and Ending the Meltdown Cycle*

## THE FOUNDATION

Emotional intelligence is not a personality trait — it is a skill. And like every skill, it must be taught. A child who cannot name what they feel will act it out instead. A child who has never been taught to manage disappointment will be destroyed by it. A child who was never allowed to fail will fall apart the first time life does not go their way.

This module equips parents to raise children who feel deeply, think clearly, and respond wisely — even under pressure. It begins with the hardest truth in emotional parenting: you cannot teach what you do not model. Before you can raise an emotionally intelligent child, you must first become an emotionally regulated parent. The work starts with you.

## KEY CONCEPTS

**Name it to tame it** — children cannot manage emotions they cannot identify.

Teaching emotional vocabulary is not soft parenting — it is neuroscience. A child who can say "I feel overwhelmed" is already halfway to self-control.

**Validation is not agreement** — when you acknowledge a child's feelings without immediately correcting or dismissing them, you build trust and lower their emotional temperature. You do not have to agree with the emotion to honor the child experiencing it.

**Resilience is built through allowed struggle** — every time you rescue your child from discomfort you rob them of a developmental opportunity. Struggle, managed with parental support, is the raw material of emotional strength.

**Your emotional regulation is their classroom** — children learn how to handle anger, disappointment, and stress primarily by watching you handle yours. Your emotional life is your child's first curriculum.

**Premarital application** – couples must examine their own emotional intelligence before parenting from it. How you handle conflict, stress, and disappointment in your marriage is exactly what your children will absorb and replicate in their own relationships.

## BIOLOGICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL

Dr. John Gottman's research identifies emotion coaching as one of the most powerful predictors of child outcomes. Children whose parents acknowledge and guide their emotions – rather than dismiss or punish them – develop stronger academic performance, healthier peer relationships, and significantly lower rates of anxiety and behavioral disorders.

Neurologically, the amygdala – the brain's emotional alarm system – is calmed not by logic but by co-regulation with a calm, attuned caregiver. You cannot think a child out of an emotional state. You must first connect, then redirect. That sequence is not optional – it is neurological. A parent who skips connection and goes straight to correction is speaking to a brain that is not yet available to listen. The correction lands on deaf ears – not because the child is choosing to ignore it, but because their nervous system is still in survival mode.

## THEOLOGICAL

Ephesians 4:26 does not say do not feel anger – it says do not sin in it. God acknowledges the emotion while redirecting the response. That is the model for emotional parenting. Jesus wept at Lazarus's tomb – not because He lacked faith, but because He was fully present to grief. He validated emotion without being controlled by it.

Proverbs 4:23 commands guarding the heart above all else because everything flows from it. Raising an emotionally intelligent child is not a therapeutic luxury – it is a biblical mandate. A child taught to steward their inner world will be equipped to steward everything God eventually places in their hands. Emotional health is not separate from spiritual health. In Scripture, they are the same work.

## THE ONE EXAMPLE THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

Of all the sections in Tool 4, the Connect Then Redirect sequence is the one that most immediately transforms the daily experience of parenting. Most parents skip straight to correction – not because they are uncaring, but because no one ever showed them a better sequence. The example below comes from Diane Thompson, applied to a real moment with her twelve-year-old daughter, Amara, on a Tuesday evening after school.

### CONNECT THEN REDIRECT — DIANE & AMARA, AGE 12

The five-step sequence below is applied to a single real incident. Read both columns – what Diane used to do, and what she did the first time she applied the sequence deliberately. The outcome was different not because Amara changed, but because Diane changed the sequence.

BEFORE — OLD RESPONSE	AFTER — THE SEQUENCE APPLIED
<p><i>Amara slammed her bag down after school and snapped at her younger brother. Diane immediately raised her voice: "Do not speak to your brother like that. Go to your room until you can be respectful." Amara stormed off. The evening ended in silence and unresolved tension.</i></p>	<p><i>Amara slammed her bag down and snapped at her brother. Diane paused – took a breath – then quietly said: "Come with me for a minute." They sat on Amara's bed. Diane said nothing for thirty seconds.</i></p>

### THE FIVE STEPS — APPLIED IN REAL TIME

STEP	WHAT DIANE DID	WHAT SHE SAID
<b>1 STOP</b>	<b>Paused her own reaction. Did not respond to the behavior immediately. Breathed.</b>	<i>"Come with me for a minute." – said quietly, not as punishment.</i>
<b>2 CON NECT</b>	<b>Sat beside Amara on her bed. No lecture. No eye contact initially. Just presence.</b>	<i>"I'm here." – two words. Said once. Then silence.</i>
<b>3 VALI DATE</b>	<b>Waited for Amara to speak first. When she didn't, Diane named what she observed.</b>	<i>"Something happened today. You don't have to talk yet. But I'm not leaving."</i>
<b>4 REDI RECT</b>	<b>After Amara shared (school conflict with a friend), Diane addressed the behavior calmly.</b>	<i>"I hear you. And – we still don't take that out on your brother. What do you owe him?"</i>

**5 REST  
ORE**

**Amara apologized to her brother. Diane stayed with her for five more minutes.**

*"I love you. Hard days are part of life. You handled the end of this one well."*

#### **WHAT DIANE WROTE IN HER ACTION COMMITMENTS THAT NIGHT**

*"Tonight was the first time I did not escalate Amara's escalation. Every other time she has come home like that, I have matched her energy – louder, firmer, more insistent – and we have always ended up in the same place: both of us upset, nothing resolved, and a wall between us for the rest of the evening. Tonight I stopped. I sat. I waited. And she talked. What came out was that her best friend had publicly humiliated her at lunch. She had been holding that for six hours and I had almost turned it into a discipline moment. When I got to step 4 and asked what she owed her brother, she got up without argument and went to apologize. Because she felt heard. Because the tank was full. The sequence works. But it only works if you do step 1 first. Stop. Before anything else – stop." – Diane Thompson*

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## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR HOME

Diane's breakthrough was not a parenting technique — it was a sequence. The five steps are simple enough to remember in the middle of a hard moment. They are structured enough to interrupt the automatic response that most parents have been running for years. And they are grounded enough in neuroscience that they work even when the child is at their most dysregulated.

The key is step 1. Not step 3 or step 4 — step 1. Stop. Before you speak. Before you correct. Before you explain. Stop and regulate yourself first. A dysregulated parent cannot co-regulate a dysregulated child. You cannot give what you do not have. The five seconds you spend breathing before you respond are the most important five seconds of the entire interaction.

Apply this sequence once — just once — with your most emotionally volatile child in their most predictable trigger moment. Watch what happens when the sequence changes. The child has not changed. The moment has not changed. Only you have changed. And that is enough.

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN TOOL 4

Tool 4 begins with a parent EQ self-assessment — seven statements scored 1 to 5. Complete this section first, before any other part of the tool. It establishes your emotional baseline as a parent, not as an indictment but as a starting point.

The Emotion Vocabulary grid in Part 2 is designed to be used actively — not just read. Pick three words your child does not yet use and introduce them in conversation this week. Not as a lesson. As language. "You seem frustrated." "That sounds like you are overwhelmed." Name it for them until they can name it for themselves.

The Resilience Builder in Part 4 is the most uncomfortable section for most parents. It asks you to identify where you over-rescue. Every parent over-rescues somewhere. The question is not whether — it is where. Find it. Name it. And choose differently the next time that situation presents itself.

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# THE UNITED FRONT

*How Couples Parent Together Without Destroying Their Marriage*

## THE FOUNDATION

Parenting is one of the most beautiful and most brutal tests a marriage will face. Children expose every unresolved difference between two people — in values, history, temperament, and expectation. Couples who enter parenthood without a unified parenting philosophy do not just struggle as parents — they struggle as spouses.

This module addresses the intersection of marriage and parenting directly, giving couples the tools to raise their children together without losing each other in the process. The central truth of this module is simple and unsparing: your children do not need perfect parents. They need aligned ones. Two imperfect parents who stand together will always outperform two skilled parents who are divided.

## KEY CONCEPTS

**Your marriage is your child's first classroom** — the way you treat each other teaches your children more about love, conflict, and respect than any conversation you will ever have with them. A strong marriage is the greatest parenting tool available.

**Disagreement is normal — division is dangerous** — couples will not always agree on parenting decisions. The goal is not perfect agreement but a committed process for resolving differences privately and presenting unity publicly.

**Never parent against your spouse** — undermining your partner's decision in front of a child — even when they are wrong — destroys both the marriage and the child's respect for authority. Disagree behind closed doors. Stand together in the room.

**The parenthood trap** — many couples become so consumed by parenting that they stop being spouses. Children need fed, clothed, and loved — but they do not need parents who have forgotten they are also partners. Protecting your marriage protects

your children.

**Premarital application** – this module is entirely premarital preparation. Couples must discuss discipline philosophy, spiritual training, extended family boundaries, schooling values, and financial priorities around children before the first pregnancy test is taken.

## BIOLOGICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL

Research by Dr. John Gottman confirms that marital conflict and instability are among the strongest predictors of poor child outcomes – including anxiety, behavioral problems, academic underperformance, and attachment disorders. Children's nervous systems are exquisitely sensitive to relational tension between their parents. Even infants show measurable physiological stress responses to parental conflict.

Conversely, children raised in homes with a strong, warm, and stable parental partnership show higher resilience, stronger emotional regulation, and significantly better long-term relationship outcomes themselves. The data is unambiguous – a healthy marriage is a public health intervention for children. When you protect your marriage, you are not choosing your spouse over your children. You are choosing the most powerful gift you can give them.

## THEOLOGICAL

Genesis 2:24 – leave and cleave – establishes that the marriage covenant is the primary human relationship, even in a home full of children. Children are a heritage, not the headquarters. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 affirms that two are better than one – and in parenting, that partnership is not just practical, it is protective.

Malachi 2:15 ties the covenant of marriage directly to the raising of godly offspring – God designed the intact, unified marriage as the optimal environment for producing children who know Him. Ephesians 6:4 addresses fathers specifically: do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. That instruction assumes a household in order, a marriage intact, and two parents moving in the same covenantal direction.

## THE ONE EXAMPLE THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

Of all the sections in Tool 5, the United Front Assessment is the one that most honestly reveals where a couple actually stands – not where they think they stand. Most couples believe they are more aligned than they are. The assessment makes the gap visible. And visible gaps can be addressed. Hidden ones cannot.

The example below belongs to Marcus and Diane Thompson. They completed the assessment independently – each scoring privately before comparing answers. What they found when they compared was not what either of them expected.

### THE UNITED FRONT ASSESSMENT — MARCUS & DIANE THOMPSON

Each spouse answered A (Agree), P (Partial), or D (Disagree) independently. Their answers are shown side by side exactly as written. Read the gaps. They tell the story.

STATEMENT	MARCUS	DIANE	GAP?
<b>We have a shared, agreed-upon parenting philosophy</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>We never undermine each other's decisions in front of the children</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>We resolve parenting disagreements privately before they reach the kids</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>We present the same rules, expectations, and consequences</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Neither of us is the "fun parent" while the other carries all authority</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>We protect our marriage while raising our children</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>No</b>

### WHAT HAPPENED WHEN MARCUS AND DIANE COMPARED THEIR ANSWERS

*"We did not speak for about two minutes after we turned our papers over. Four gaps out of six statements. We had been parenting together for twelve years and we had never once sat down and asked each other: do we actually agree on this? The one that landed hardest was row two. I answered A – I believed I never undermined Diane in front of the children. She answered D. That difference sat between us like something neither of us wanted to name. When we finally talked about it, she gave me three specific examples from the previous month. I had not even registered them as undermining. I thought I was just being reasonable. She experienced it as being overruled. Row five was next. I thought we were equal in authority. She said I had been the fun parent for three years while she carried every hard conversation, every consequence, every no. I had no idea she felt that way. The assessment did not create these problems. They were already there. It just finally gave us a table to sit down at and name what we had been living around for years." – Marcus Thompson*

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## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR MARRIAGE

Marcus and Diane's gaps were not evidence of a failing marriage. They were evidence of a marriage that had been parenting on assumption – assuming alignment without ever testing it. Most couples do this. It is not negligence. It is what happens when two people are moving fast, managing children, and never stop long enough to ask: are we actually on the same page?

The gap on row two was the most important discovery. Not because Marcus was a bad husband – he was not – but because he had been acting on a perception of himself that did not match his wife's lived experience. That gap, unnamed, would have continued to erode trust in both the marriage and the parenting partnership. Named, it became the beginning of a real change.

Every D on the assessment is a gift. Not a wound – a gift. It marks exactly where the work needs to happen before that disagreement finds its way into a moment with a child in the room, where the stakes are higher and the options are fewer.

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN TOOL 5

Tool 5 must be completed by both spouses – not one reading and passing it to the other. Sit down together with two pens, answer Part 1 independently, then compare. The instruction to answer separately is not a formality – it is the entire mechanism that makes the assessment work. If you discuss it first, you will converge on the same answers and miss the real gaps.

The Conflict Resolution Protocol in Part 3 is designed to be read aloud together – each step discussed before moving to the next. For any step where you have different instincts, pause. That step is not a rule to debate – it is a skill to practice. Talk about a recent parenting conflict and apply the protocol to it retroactively. Ask: what would we have done differently if we had been following this?

The Parenthood Trap section asks whether you are still spouses. Answer it honestly. If you checked fewer than four items, your marriage is not just struggling as a partnership – it is

failing as a parenting model. Children learn what love looks like from watching you love each other. Protect the marriage. It is the most important thing you will ever do for your children.

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# SCREENS, CULTURE & THE BATTLE FOR YOUR CHILD'S MIND

*Raising Kids with Values in a World That Has None*

## THE FOUNDATION

The most dangerous parenting mistake of this generation is passive media consumption without intentional values formation. Your child's mind is a battlefield — and if you are not deliberately shaping what goes into it, the culture will do it for you, without your permission and without your values. Screens are not the enemy. Passivity is.

This module equips parents to engage the cultural war for their child's mind with wisdom, clarity, and a strategy that actually works in a digital world. It begins with an uncomfortable truth: you are not competing with a distraction. You are competing with a multi-billion-dollar industry staffed by behavioral scientists whose entire job is to capture and hold your child's attention — indefinitely, addictively, and without your consent.

## KEY CONCEPTS

**The algorithm is parenting your child** — every unmonitored screen is an open door to content, values, and voices that directly compete with everything you are building at home. Passive screen time is not neutral — it is formation happening without your input.

**Rules without relationship produce rebellion** — you cannot ban your way to a values-driven child. Restriction without connection drives behavior underground. Build the relationship first; the boundaries will hold because trust holds them.

**Media literacy is a parenting essential** — teach your child to think critically about what they watch and who they follow. A child who can analyze culture is far more protected than one who is simply sheltered from it.

**Your home must offer something better** — children run to screens when home is boring, tense, or disconnected. The most effective screen management strategy is a

home so rich in presence and connection that the screen loses its competition.

**Premarital application** – couples must establish their shared philosophy on technology, social media, entertainment, and cultural engagement before children arrive. These conversations are far easier before a twelve-year-old is demanding a smartphone.

## BIOLOGICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL

Dr. Jean Twenge's longitudinal studies demonstrate that the sharp rise in adolescent mental health crises after 2012 correlates precisely with widespread smartphone adoption among teenagers. Depression, anxiety, loneliness, and suicide rates all shifted dramatically at the same inflection point. The dopamine reward system – already highly sensitive in developing brains – is systematically hijacked by social media platforms engineered specifically to maximize engagement and minimize self-regulation.

Research from the American Psychological Association confirms that excessive screen time in children is directly linked to increased rates of anxiety, depression, attention disorders, and disrupted sleep architecture. The average child now spends more time consuming digital media than sleeping. Parents are not fighting a preference – they are fighting a neurological addiction mechanism designed by people who understand the developing brain far better than most parents do. Awareness is the beginning of strategy.

## THEOLOGICAL

Romans 12:2 commands transformation by the renewing of the mind and warns explicitly against conformity to the pattern of this world. That is not a passive instruction. It requires active, intentional mental formation. Philippians 4:8 gives parents the content filter: whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable – think on these things. That standard applies to every screen, platform, and influence that enters your home.

Proverbs 4:23 – guard your heart above all else, for everything you do flows from it – is the original media literacy command. A child whose heart is guarded, whose mind is trained to discern, and whose home offers genuine connection will navigate a corrupt culture without being consumed by it. The goal is not a child who has never seen the culture. It is a child equipped to stand in it.

## THE ONE EXAMPLE THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

Of all the sections in Tool 6, the Household Media Rules builder is the one that most immediately puts structure where chaos has lived. Most families have wishes about screens – not rules. There is a vast difference between the two. A wish says: I hope my child doesn't spend too much time on that. A rule says: here is exactly what happens, and both parents will enforce it.

The example below belongs to Marcus and Diane Thompson. Before completing Tool 6, they had no written media rules in their home. Their children had devices in their bedrooms, unlimited screen time on weekends, and social media accounts Marcus had never reviewed. They completed the rules builder on a Sunday afternoon. By Monday morning, three of the six rules were already in effect.

### HOUSEHOLD MEDIA RULES — THOMPSON FAMILY

Each rule was agreed upon by both Marcus and Diane before being communicated to their children. Note the specificity – not "less screen time" but exact hours, exact locations, exact consequences. Vague rules produce vague compliance.

AREA	THE THOMPSON FAMILY RULE	CONSEQUENCE IF BROKEN
<b>Screen time limits</b>	<i>2 hours maximum on school days. 3 hours on weekends. Tracked on family screen time app.</i>	<i>Excess time is deducted from the following day's allowance. No exceptions, no appeals.</i>
<b>Device-free zones</b>	<i>No devices at the dinner table. No devices in bedrooms after 8:30pm. Kitchen charges all devices overnight.</i>	<i>Device confiscated for 24 hours. First offense warning. Second offense – one week.</i>
<b>Bedtime cutoff</b>	<i>All devices to the kitchen charging station by 8:30pm. Parents model this rule too.</i>	<i>Same as device-free zone violation. The rule applies to parents as well as children.</i>
<b>Content standards</b>	<i>All new apps require parent approval before download. No app approval = no download. Period.</i>	<i>Unapproved apps removed immediately. Device reviewed by a parent that evening.</i>

<b>Social media age</b>	No social media accounts before age 14. At 14, account created with parent access. At 16, reviewed annually.	Account deleted. Waiting period extended by six months for each violation.
<b>Consequence for violations</b>	First violation: warning and conversation. Second: 48-hour device loss. Third: one-week loss.	The escalation is written, posted on the refrigerator, and applies to all three children equally.

**WHAT MARCUS WROTE THE WEEK AFTER IMPLEMENTING THE RULES**

"We had been talking about screen time for three years. We had never written anything down. Every conversation ended the same way – one of us gave in, the children waited it out, and nothing changed. Writing the rules took forty minutes. Posting them on the refrigerator took two. The first night the charging station rule went into effect, our twelve-year-old pushed back hard. Marcus stood firm. Diane stood firm. We said the same words because we had agreed on them in advance. He handed over his phone. What surprised us was what happened by day four. He stopped asking. He stopped negotiating. He started reading again – something he had not done voluntarily in two years. The rule did not just reduce screen time. It created space for something else to grow. We did not take something away from our children. We gave them back their boredom – and their imagination followed." – Diane Thompson

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## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR HOME

Diane's last line is the most important sentence in this module. "We did not take something away from our children. We gave them back their boredom – and their imagination followed." That is what a screen-saturated childhood costs children most – not information, not entertainment, but the capacity to be bored long enough for creativity, curiosity, and genuine thought to emerge.

The Thompson family's rules are specific and enforceable because Marcus and Diane wrote them together before a single conversation with their children. That sequence matters. Rules that come out of conflict are reactive and inconsistent. Rules that are decided in advance – calmly, together – are principled and far easier to enforce when the moment comes.

Your rules will look different from theirs. Your children's ages, your family's rhythms, and your own convictions will shape what goes in each row. That is as it should be. What cannot be different is the requirement for specificity. Write the rule. Write the consequence. Agree on both. Post it where everyone can see it. Then enforce it the first time – not the fifth.

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN TOOL 6

Tool 6 begins with the Screen Time Reality Audit – four honest questions about what is actually happening in your home right now. Answer them before you reach for the rules builder. You cannot fix a problem you have not accurately named.

The Media Literacy table in Part 3 is designed to be used at the dinner table – not as a lesson, but as a conversation. Pick one question per week and raise it naturally after watching something together. "What values is that character living by – and do we agree with them?" That one question, asked consistently, builds a discerning mind more effectively than any content filter ever will.

The Values Formation checklist in Part 4 is the most important section for parents who want to solve the screen problem strategically. Every unchecked box is not a screen

problem – it is a home problem. Screens fill the space that connection, presence, and meaning have vacated. Fill those spaces intentionally, and the screen loses its power without a single rule being enforced.

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# LEGACY PARENTING

*Raising Children Who Leave Home Ready — Spiritually, Emotionally, and Practically*

## THE FOUNDATION

The goal of parenting is not to keep your children — it is to release them. Every decision you make, every boundary you set, every conversation you have is preparing them for a day when you will not be in the room. Legacy parenting asks the most important question in child-raising: what kind of adult am I building? Not what kind of child do I have right now — but what kind of human being will walk out of my home in ten, fifteen, twenty years.

This module is about the long game — and how to play it with intention every single day. It challenges parents to stop measuring success by today's behavior and start measuring it by the person that behavior is slowly becoming. Every habit you build in your child, every value you instill, every skill you teach is either building something that will outlast you — or spending down something that should have outlasted you. The work begins now.

## KEY CONCEPTS

**The goal is launch, not control** — your job is to work yourself out of a job. Every year, your child should need you slightly less for survival and trust you slightly more for wisdom. Independence is not rebellion — it is evidence that your parenting is working.

**Faith must be transferred, not assumed** — a child raised in church is not automatically a child with faith. Spiritual legacy requires intentional conversation, modeled devotion, and a home where God is present in the ordinary, not just the religious.

**Practical competence is part of legacy** — your child should leave your home knowing how to cook, manage money, navigate conflict, hold a job, and maintain a home. Practical life skills are not extras — they are the infrastructure of adult success.

**The relationship must survive the transition** – the parent-child relationship must shift from authority to friendship as children mature. Parents who cannot make that transition lose their children's presence and influence at exactly the moment it is needed most.

**Premarital application** – the legacy you received from your family of origin is the legacy you will unconsciously pass on. Couples must examine, discuss, and deliberately decide which generational patterns to continue and which to break before those patterns become their children's inheritance.

## BIOLOGICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL

Developmental psychologist Erik Erikson identified the final stage of adolescent development as identity formation – the process by which a young person answers the question: who am I, and what do I stand for? Parents who have built secure attachment, consistent values, and open communication throughout childhood give their children the psychological foundation to answer that question from a place of security rather than confusion.

Research on emerging adulthood by Dr. Jeffrey Arnett confirms that young people who maintain close, warm relationships with their parents during the transition to independence show significantly higher rates of life satisfaction, relational stability, and vocational clarity. The relationship does not end at eighteen – it transforms. Parents who prepare for that transformation keep their influence. Those who do not lose it – precisely when their child needs them most.

## THEOLOGICAL

Psalm 127:4 compares children to arrows in the hand of a warrior – arrows are not held; they are aimed and released. The entire purpose of holding the arrow is the release. Proverbs 22:6 – train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it – is a legacy promise attached to a legacy process. The training happens now. The fruit appears later.

Deuteronomy 6:2 extends the vision across generations – so that you, your children, and your children's children may fear the Lord. Biblical parenting is never just about the child in front of you. It is about the generation that child will one day raise. Every intentional parenting decision you make today is an investment that compounds across generations – long after you are gone. You are not just raising a child. You are shaping a legacy.

## THE ONE EXAMPLE THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

Of all the sections in Tool 7, the Generational Pattern Breaker is the one that reaches deepest. Every other section in this module looks forward – at the child you are building. This one looks backward – at the home you came from. And what most parents discover is that the patterns they most want to break in their children are the ones they are still living themselves, imported from their own childhood without ever choosing them.

Marcus Thompson completed this section alone, late on a Friday night, after his children had gone to bed. He had been resistant to the exercise – certain he already knew what patterns he had inherited and what he had changed. He was wrong about both.

### THE GENERATIONAL PATTERN BREAKER – MARCUS THOMPSON

The left column is what Marcus received. The right column is what he is – or is committed to – building instead. Read the honesty in the gap between those two columns. That gap is where legacy is made.

AREA	PATTERN I RECEIVED	PATTERN I AM BUILDING
<b>Relationship with money</b>	<i>Fear and scarcity. Money was never discussed. We never had enough and nobody explained why.</i>	<i>Open, regular money conversations with my children. Teaching earning, giving, and saving by age 8.</i>
<b>How conflict was handled</b>	<i>Silence, then explosion. My father went quiet for days, then erupted. Nobody ever resolved anything.</i>	<i>Name it, own it, repair it. I am learning to say "I was wrong" in front of my children. Every time.</i>
<b>Expression of love</b>	<i>Provider, not present. My father worked hard. He never said "I love you." Not once.</i>	<i>I say it daily. I show up. I sit on the floor. I know their friends' names. Presence is the point.</i>
<b>Faith and spiritual life</b>	<i>Sunday performance. Church was appearance, not devotion. Faith was never personal or practiced at home.</i>	<i>Daily prayer. Scripture at dinner. Honest conversations about doubt. Faith as a living thing, not a scheduled one.</i>
<b>How failure was treated</b>	<i>Shame and silence. Mistakes were hidden, not discussed. Failure meant you were the failure.</i>	<i>Debrief, not condemn. When my children fail, we sit with it and ask: what did we learn? Then we move forward.</i>

**Work ethic modeled**

*Workaholic absence. Hard work was the value – but it crowded out everything else, including us.*

*Work with boundaries. I am home for dinner. I attend the games. I am building legacy, not just income.*

**WHAT MARCUS WROTE AFTER COMPLETING THE TABLE**

*"I thought I had already done this work. I was wrong. The conflict row stopped me cold. I have been telling myself for years that I handle conflict differently from my father. But when I wrote down what I actually do – I recognized him. I go quiet. Then I explode. I just do it faster than he did. The pattern is the same. Only the timeline changed. The love row was the one I could not finish without walking away. My father never said I love you. Not once in my entire childhood. I have said it to my children every day of their lives. I thought that was enough. But when I sat with the building column, I realized saying it is the floor – not the ceiling. My twelve-year-old does not need me to say it more. He needs me to show up more. Those are different things. This table is not comfortable. It is not supposed to be. The patterns your parents passed you were passed to them. Breaking a generational pattern is not an act of judgment. It is an act of love – for your children, and for the generations that follow them." – Marcus Thompson*

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## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR LEGACY

Marcus's conflict row is the most important row in the table. Not because conflict management is the most important category – but because he discovered something that most people who do this exercise discover: the pattern you are most confident you have broken is often the pattern you are still living, in a slightly different form, with a slightly different face.

The generational pattern breaker does not require you to condemn your parents. Most parents gave what they had – which was what they received. The exercise is not about blame. It is about clarity. You cannot deliberately choose something different until you have clearly seen what you are choosing it from.

Every row you fill in the right column is a decision. Not a wish. Not a hope. A decision – made in writing, with the full awareness of what you are replacing and why. That decision, made consistently across the years of your children's lives, is what a legacy actually is. Not the money you leave. The pattern you break.

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN TOOL 7

Tool 7 opens with the Legacy Vision questions – four prompts that require you to think past the daily urgency of parenting and name what you are actually building toward. Do not rush these. They are the foundation everything else rests on. If you cannot answer what success looks like at age 18, you cannot make consistent decisions in the direction of that success.

The Launch Readiness Audit in Part 2 is most useful when scored honestly against where your child is right now – not where you hope they will be, and not against an idealized version of who they could become. Score what is true today. The gaps you identify are your parenting agenda for this season.

The Generational Pattern Breaker in Part 5 should be completed alone first – then shared with your spouse. Some of what you write will be difficult to say aloud. Write it anyway. The patterns that go unnamed in the left column are the patterns most likely to appear

unnamed in the right column of your child's table – twenty years from now.

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