

# Understanding and Encouraging Heart Change

As parents, it is easy to seek immediate behavior modification in our children, but miss out on their long-term discipleship. The key is seeking their heart change, not just an improvement in how they act.

While behavior is certainly important, the real work is to have their heart set on God, with a growing desire to please Him. As one author put it, “once this happens, everything else is just mopping up.” We recommend that parents follow the suggested Seven-Step Plan to fully understand the importance of heart change. Getting this right sets the stage for all growth in the future.

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→ [Article: Understanding and Encouraging Heart Change](#)

→ [Bible Study: Understanding and Encouraging Heart Change](#)

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## Resources

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### Parenting is Heart Work - Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller

This book explains how most parents seek behavior modification in their children, but the important thing is to mold a child's heart for the future. The Bible mentions the word heart more than 750 times, describing it as the center of our being. Once the heart is changed, parents will see not only behavior change; the child's motivations and focus will be changed as well. The authors give strategies to address a variety of challenges parents face.

*\*This book includes a “Reader's Guide” at the end of the book, which sets forth discussion questions for each chapter.*

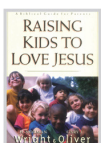
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### Shepherding a Child's Heart - Tedd Tripp

The author focuses on foundational areas for biblical parenting, beginning with the issues of the heart, including influences on the child, Godward orientation, authority, examining goals, discipline and other areas. With a clear emphasis on parents' recognizing the proper goals of shepherding their child, the author provides practical suggestions for accomplishing those goals. The author concludes with advice on shepherding the child through the various stages of childhood.

*\* This book includes application questions at the end of each chapter.*



### Raising Kids to Love Jesus - H. Norman Wright and Gary J. Oliver

The emphasis on heart change continues in this book. By cultivating understanding and intimacy with children, parents can plant seeds that will grow, shaping their children in a powerful way. The need to know their child is vastly more important than simply shaping their behavior. The purpose of the book is to help parents cultivate a love for the Lord in their children by effectively modeling and communicating their own relationship with Jesus. Parents shouldn't just provide guidelines but be shepherds. The book has a section that focuses on personality types, highlighting how each child is unique, and how parents should adjust based on their children's personality traits.



## Gospel-Centered Family - Ed Moll and Tim Chester

The authors explain how God is rightfully in charge and His teachings are good, laying a foundation for respect for God's authority. By respecting God and a child's parents, a basis is formed for a heart change, which the authors describe as much more important than "succeeding" in life. The authors describe how parents need God's grace and His discipline as they seek to discipline their children. Practical advice on administering appropriate discipline is described. The book offers practical guidance on how parents can develop a loving and durable relationship with their children

*\*This book includes Questions for Reflection at the end of each chapter. • Can you recall a time in your life when you believe that your heart was changed by God?*



### Issues to Ponder for Understanding and Encouraging Heart Change

- If so, how would you describe that change to your child? What specific things changed in your life?

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- Do you have a friend or member in your church who has been clearly transformed by God? Have you ever asked that person to share his or her story with your family? If not, will you?

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- Do you consider your child a follower of Jesus? Consider your child's conversion story and discuss what changes you may or may not have seen in your child since that event.

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- What areas are you investing heavily (time, money, energy) into your child's development? Sports, education, other activities? How would you prioritize these areas in order of importance in your child's life?

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- How would you describe your family's investment in the spiritual development of your children?

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