

Intentional Parenting: Autopilot is for Planes

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This book is written with all parents in mind and more specifically to the parent who realizes that parenting requires self-reflection, awareness, and an openness to learning from your child. The book is engaging with questions throughout the chapters to help parents process and assimilate the information on a personal level.

The authors invite parents to always remember:

- To extend grace to yourself in the journey of parenting
- That you are going to make mistakes
- God can redeem mistakes made in parenting
- God extends grace to you (parent) so you can extend grace and mercy to your child
- When a child learning to ride a bike falls off, you encourage him to get back on. In the same way, encourage yourself to dust yourself off and continue the journey.

Chapter 1: Being an Intentional Parent

“He’s a father who is aware of his daughter’s struggles but knows that they don’t just exist in a vacuum. He knows he’s a part of the problem too. And he can be a part of the solution, maybe even one of the most important parts.”

Being an intentional parent means you study your intention, your purpose in parenting – don’t lose the emphasis of enjoyment, connection and relationship with your child. Parent out of love (be proactive-- thoughtful, intentional, strategic and wise, responsive, engaged, invested, connected) not out of fear (reactive – “don’t do....”).

- Question: Why did you decide to become a parent? Most do not consider this question; it’s more or less the next logical step.

The goal should be to respond out of who you are, who God made you to be, instead of how you feel. The daily moments of parenting may take you to the end of yourself, which often leads to responding out of what you feel. Responding rightly requires dependence and leaning into God constantly for wisdom and strength.

Parenting is a transformative lovely and disruptive process. “The intensity and passion of parenting bring the potential not only for worst, but also for our very best as human beings.”...being both willing to make huge sacrifices for your child and also experiencing deep selfishness due to the varied disruptions you encounter (such as sleepless nights).

- Questions: Identify 3 different moments when you felt helpless as a parent. What did you take away from those experiences? How has parenting changed you as person?
- Activities:
 - 1) Take an inventory of who you are. Know your strengths and your struggles. Try to understand how your kids experience you.

- 2) You are invited to become a student of your own maturity (or lack thereof). Find three individuals (who have seen you at your best and worst) who know you deeply and share some history. Invite them to give you some honest feedback with the following questions:
- What have you observed about me as a parent?
 - What are the strengths I bring to parenting?
 - What are the struggles I bring to parenting?
 - What do you enjoy about being in relationship with me?
 - What are the challenges about being in relationship with me?

Acknowledge to your child that you realize you will make mistakes along the way. You might say, “Sometimes I love you so much that I get stuck on teaching you, instructing you and correcting you and I forget to enjoy you and spend time with you and I want to ask you to help me.”

- Questions to ask child: What are some things you enjoy that we do together? What do you wish I would do more of as a parent? What do you wish I wouldn't do or do differently as a parent?

As a parent, you should gain understanding of general childhood development and milestones and the role gender plays in development. You should also seek to understand your child's temperament and parent in tandem to it, not in opposition.

- Questions: How would you define your child's temperament? What are some specific ways you can creatively work within your child's temperament rather than against it?

Parents are the leaders of the family. Be intentional about casting vision for your family.

- Activities:

- 1) Write a mission statement highlighting what you want to be about as a family. Define your core values and develop family goals.
- 2) Make a list of the things you do as a family during a given week, eg. eat, sleep, check email, play video games. All members' daily activities should be included. Then make a second list with the necessary things in life (eat, sleep, work/school). Combine any new items to the first list that weren't there before. Now compare your core values to these activities – are they aligned?

Chapter 2: Being a Patient Parent

The authors suggest the following:

- Breathe. Slow yourself and your responses down (count to ten); assess if you are frustrated with your child or frustrated in general.
- Listen. Be present.
- Give your child a chance to self-correct before getting frustrated about the wrong thing he did.
- Give your child the benefit of the doubt. The perceived difference in how you see your child's behavior can do quite a bit to dictate the difference in your response.
- Keep a sense of humor. In safe, harmless situations a little laughter can help you connect with your child. Your child needs your wisdom more than your frustration in many situations.
- Try to see your child in the most challenging moments and not only their behavior.
- Take care of yourself.
- Don't take things too personally.
- Assume the best.
- Be aware of your expectations .
- Be prepared for failure.
- Give your child tools to deal with his or her emotions.
- Say frequently –“try again”.
- Think about your child's capabilities. Be aware of children's milestones. Be aware of your cognitive, developmental, and physical abilities. Use relatable things, such as your child's favorite TV show, as a time reference for bedtime.
- Allow downtime in your child's schedule. Don't pack your days so full that you can't keep up due to running from activity to activity.
- Give yourself a timeout.
- Start 15 minutes early.
- Expect that your patience will be challenged. As your child grows and begins to transition into an independent person, he or she will push against your boundaries on the journey to self-discovery.
- Remember your childhood. Journal what your life was like at your child's age.
- Learn your triggers. They often have more to do with you than with your child.
- Watch your fuse
- Pray frequently

Questions: When do you get the most discouraged as a parent? How do you see your discouragement affecting your child? Which of the suggestions above do you struggle with the most? What could you do practically to give yourself an opportunity for more patience? What could you do spiritually to experience more of God's passionate patience with you?

Chapter 3: Being a Grown-Up Parent

You will tend to respond to your child in a way that draws from your past. Parenting will awaken and trigger unresolved needs and hurts in your life. When that happens you will see, feel and reason much like a child.

- Questions: What are you aware of that feels unresolved from your childhood? When in parenting do you act more like a child/teenager than an adult? How do you act in those moments?

Parents tend to develop habits or parenting styles that aren't always helpful. The authors describe the following types of parents:

Parenting Style	Characteristics	This parent needs...	Things to consider
Peter Pan Parent	Unwilling to grow up; all play; fun parent	Courage	Children will find confidence in your courage to set boundaries. Hold them accountable; set and maintain structure.
Hovering Parent	Controlled by fear and anxiety	To develop trust in his or her child	Allow your child to experience a little of life (including a few developmentally appropriate bumps). Parent out of love, not fear.
Hipster Parent	Insecure, self-centered; values being cool and in the know; behavior appears at times like a teenager	To know that the child needs to respect you more than like you	Give your child a version of adulthood to look forward to instead of seeing adolescence as the "glory years." Nothing is wrong with being cool; just ensure that your child values character over looking cool.
Second Chance Parent	Interdependent; sees son's or daughter's childhood as an extension of his or her own	To foster independent connectedness with the child	Remember being connected has nothing to do with being alike. Your child needs to freely connect with you in a way that frees you each to be clearly child and grown-up.
Pain-Free Parent	Has experienced profound hurt or pain at some point in life; lives in a way that isolates herself from pain	Vulnerability	Your child will bring you tremendous joy and tremendous pain. If you isolate yourself from the emotion that vulnerability brings, you also isolate from your child.

- Questions: Which parent do you identify with the most? What you feel you need in response? Where could you give God and others in your community opportunities to help meet that need?

Chapter 4: Being a Balanced Parent

Love and Fear - Strive to parent in love in the presence of fear. Acknowledge that fear exists, yet do not parent out of that place. Support independence in small ways.

- Questions: Where are you most afraid as a parent? What is an area in which you could stop gripping and invite more trust?

Discipline and Relationships - Discipline has always been intended for teaching, shaping, and protecting our kids as a way of showing them love and care. Therefore, your parenting posture during discipline should maintain one of love, not of anger. Discipline is never about harming or shaming your child. There's an old saying that "rules without relationship leads to rebellion." One could also state that relationship without rules leads to kids feeling too much power and a lack of safety. **The goal is to "work toward having rules and relationship in place, and to parent consistently with both."**

Boundaries and Freedom – This tension arises as a result of parents' attempts to set healthy boundaries while also supporting their child's independence and allowing freedom. Look for Significant Learning Opportunities (SLO) – moments in which parents avoid rescuing and instead allow the child to learn through the consequences of his or her own decisions (good or bad). This is about developing character and strengthening resilience. If you ignore SLO's and lean more toward the parent lecture when SLO's arise, you as a parent have now taken away from your child the deep understanding that takes place when your child learns through experience.

Emotions - Balanced parents give the gift of having emotions but not parenting out of emotion. Parenting out of emotion is like grocery shopping on an empty stomach, which leads to impulsive, unhealthy food choices that you later regret. Take a break and decide if discipline needs to be part of the equation and, if so, how to do that and **let it be about instruction and not about emotions.**

- Question: What can you do or where can you go when you feel emotionally charged and need some time/space to make more thoughtful parenting decisions?

Time - Discontinue activities that are not aligned with your family values. The culture elevates activity and fast pace above connection. There is no rule that says you must have all your children participate in multiple sporting activities—which leaves you functioning as a driver instead of connected parent in a connected family.

- Activity: Have each of your family write down their idea of a perfect Sunday and drop that slip of paper into a hat. Read aloud together and decide what you'd like to do with the ideas.

Support – It seems parents tend to offer girls too much support with relational challenges. Parents get into the trap of problem solving for girls. Listen more. For boys, academic support seems to be the standout. School can be challenging for boys, which may mean that parents tend

to camp out at the table while homework is being done. While helping your son is important, give him space to explore his capability without becoming dependent on this support and belief that he will naturally need your help. Continue working on your own task within range. which lets your child know you are available when he needs you the most.

- Questions to ask your kids: What are you thinking? What are you going to do in response to that? Shift the ownership back to your child and build into his or her resourcefulness, independence and resilience.

Chapter 5: Being a Consistent Parent

Consistency is contrary to nature and life, and yet it is important for parents if they intend to help create a sense of security in their children. Consistency with discipline and consequences play a part in enhanced self-worth for teens as they learn from their own choices.

CONSISTENCY IN PARENTING

Domain	Age Range			Questions to consider
	Toddlers	Children	Teenagers	
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use key repetitive statements Use visuals Model the values for your toddler Explain your choices (why) Give your priorities priority time and Praise your child (he or she likes to please you and do well) Praise with more emphasis on effort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be concrete Think literally about your own actions (children follow suit) Make it fun Focus on the positive Give them opportunities to be involved, however small Prioritize the values for your child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach with your actions and with consequences Use the back door –Instead of being tuned out with “Why didn’t clean your room?”, say, “Responsible kids get to hang out with their friends on the weekend.” Say as much as you can with few words Ask questions that help your child to think and learn for themselves Respect their values (ones that are respectable) Don’t be afraid to fail Have realistic expectations of their time Give them opportunities to experience your values together and separately Use the power of peers to reinforce your family value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What were the three main values in your childhood home? Do you want your home to have the same values or different ones?
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start when they are very little with age-appropriate tasks Grow their chores with them Supervise them Make a routine Make it fun Encourage often Let them help Keep your expectations consistent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show your pride—acknowledge when they are responsible Make chores a part of normal family life Give an allowance appropriately Let them earn extra money/privileges with extra chores Match age level with responsibilities Slow down and let them help Make it a family project Create a chore chart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give them flexible boundaries Let consequences do the teaching Require something of them Give them a voice Require responsibility outside the home Increase responsibilities with age Reward responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What helps kids feel important?

Domain	Age Range			Questions to consider
	Toddlers	Children	Teenagers	
Discipline	<p>Teaching comes first—they don't automatically know what will elicit a no from you</p> <p>Use simple repetitive statements</p> <p>Change location</p> <p>Remove offending objects (it proves that you are in charge)</p> <p>Time out (special chair, quiet room)—not their bedrooms</p> <p>Handling Tantrums (when appropriate and safe, keep walking—they will eventually catch up with you).</p> <p>Don't allow whining to work and gain power ("I only listen to children who speak with real voices, not whines.")</p> <p>Don't give in to the bedtime battle. ("Would you like to go to bed now or in five minutes?" or "Would you like to read a bedtime story or sing a song?"—choices give kids a sense of control and your consistency develops trust and security for your child in relationship to you)</p>	<p>Speak to them appropriately—when you speak to children as if they are adults, they start to believe they should be treated that way in all things... leading to entitled kids</p> <p>Don't allow them to get away with the worst versions of themselves—because they will start believing that's who they are</p> <p>Say what you mean and be able to enforce it ("I believe you are capable of more.")</p> <p>Begin at home – if you don't want public whining, address the whining at home first</p> <p>Give opportunities to learn (before consequence) self-control</p> <p>Give them choice—your warning can be a choice ("You can speak to me respectfully or spend some time in the quiet chair, calming yourself down. It's your choice.")</p> <p><u>Communicate that consequences are due to their poor choices, rather than your strict parenting</u></p> <p>Do no argue ("I love you too much to argue." or "I'll meet you back here in 10 minutes (if time permits) so we can both listen to each other and try to meet the need.")</p> <p>Provide boundaries ("You may pay your sister \$1/day rent each time you take her clothes without asking her permission." Or "There is no fighting in the car. The cost when you do is \$5. You can pay in chores, cash or toys.")</p> <p>Turn mistakes into learning opportunities ("How would you like to handle this situation?")</p> <p>Let them know you are available when they need help.</p> <p>Parent out of empathy, not emotional reactions (Empathy maintains the relationship; consequences, not your emotions, teach the lesson.)</p> <p>Be empathetic when the consequences are enforced ("We'll really miss you at the movie tonight.")</p> <p>Know when to walk away—negative emotions do not reinforce positive behavior</p> <p>Use charts as a system of rewards—repetition reinforces your message</p>	<p>Be the parent</p> <p>Leave the drama to them</p> <p>Choose your battles</p> <p>Let the consequences fit the crime</p> <p>Assume the best</p> <p>Focus on the present, not the past</p> <p>Give them hope</p> <p>Allow them to make mistakes</p> <p>Protect the good things</p> <p>Don't lose sight of who they can be</p>	<p>In what parenting arena do I need to be more consistent?</p>

Chapter 6: Being a Playful Parent

Live lightheartedly through the lens of a child's eyes.

- Acknowledge your obstacle to play:
 - ~ “I look silly”
 - ~ “I’m not accomplishing anything”
 - ~ “I’m too tired”
 - ~ “I don’t want to draw attention to myself”
 - ~ “I’m afraid”
 - Be open to fun.
 - Watch your kids play.
 - Jump in and play with your child.
 - Prioritize parent play time (equally important as playing with your child).
- ~ “I can’t do that like I used to”
 - ~ “What would the other parents think?”
 - ~ “I don’t know what to do, and my kids don’t want me to play with them”

Chapter 7: Being a Connected Parent

We all want to feel significant—that our lives matter.

- Real connection takes place with real people, through real experiences.
- Important ingredients for connection
 - ~ reciprocity (give and take in relationship)
 - ~ empathy (being aware of others’ feelings)
 - ~ regulation (not speaking every thought that travels through your mind, nor responding out of every emotion you feel)
- An invitation to play is an invitation to relationship and connection—look for invitations.
- Show interest. Study your child’s unique design, development, passions, and temperament and nurture them.
- Help your child feel safe. Reassure with consistent actions that his/her physical and emotional safety is important to you and will be protected.
- Demonstrate contentment apart from being a parent. Let your child know he or she does not have the responsibility of keeping or making you happy. It’s healthy for your child to see you thrive outside of your parental role.

Chapter 8: Being an Encouraging Parent

Your words are more important and powerful in your child's life than anyone else's will ever be. Create positive future tapes now for your kids to replay later.

- Encouragement is not:
 - ~ Criticism
 - ~ Minimizing
 - ~ Sarcasm
 - ~ Comparing
 - ~ Quick advice
 - ~ Compensating
 - ~ Manipulation
- Encouragement is consistently helping your child see who he can be.
- Encouragement requires and brings faith, objectivity, discernment, persistence and optimism together in a way that enables you to speak truth into the darkness for and with your child.
- Encouragement offers hope to your child.

Chapter 9: Being a Spiritual Parent

Raising a child is too hard; you just can't do it alone. As your children grow in independence, a spiritual parent grows in dependence on God. He or she...

- Stays in prayer and in God's word constantly for wisdom and guidance (also a model for your child)
- Stays in **community**
 - ~ Keeps you from believing the myth, "All the other parents have it together."
 - ~ Allows you to keep perspective and share vulnerabilities
 - ~ Reminder that you are not alone
- Stays **grateful**. Gratitude
 - ~ Is infectious and invites others to join in
 - ~ Teaches your child that peace can be found even through chaotic situations with a simple statement, "Isn't this a beautiful day?"
- Has **discernment**—understands that there is a time for everything (a time to teach and a time to allow your children to discover truth for themselves)
- **Trusts** God to take care of his or her child. Love for your child drives you to try and protect him/her from everything; it comes with many "if's," typically negative possibilities. Be reminded that our children are on loan and we do not own them.
- **Question:** How would your parenting look different if you really trusted God?

Chapter 10: Being a Merciful Parent

In the midst of a teachable moment for your child, you can stay connected while communicating that he or she is loved enough to be found out (in fact, it is an act of mercy when the child is found out in wrongdoing).

- The same is true for parents when they are also found out and mercifully loved and disciplined by God and openly model that for their children.
- Extending mercy is also a way to teach your children empathy.
- Being a merciful parent also works to eventually get to a point when long lectures are abandoned for lessons learned from natural consequences. You want your child to have “moments of connecting the dots.”

Chapter 11: Being a Hopeful Parent

- Every child and every family struggle. Some just hide it better than others. They hide it because there is a lie that everybody else has perfect lives. We tend to buy into that when we take on a victim mentality.
- Your children are listening and seeing far more than you can imagine. Make your words count (don't depend on long lectures). As they get older, get to the point with love. Engage them in ways which give them ownership of their growth, actions and consequences.
- You are the parent; it matters more that your child respects you than likes you. This leads to security—the child knows he or she is loved because a safe emotional and physical space is created through consistency. Do not engage your child like his or her peers do.
- Allowing your child/teen to feel like the most powerful person in the family can lead to insecurity.
- You don't have to do it alone. Your child needs other voices as he/she grows and develops.
- Explore other resources to help fulfill some of your child's developmental needs (career, extracurriculars, church groups, etc.)
- Consistency works. There are no perfect consequences. This replaces the lie that “nothing works.”
- Suffering produces good things, even in your child. Resilience is born out of suffering. Kids learn that they can get through and overcome whatever challenges they are facing. Don't become overwhelmed to the point of being hopeless because your child struggles; help your child see how each situation can lead to a greater purpose and character development.
- Find your hope outside of your children. Neither you nor your child should develop a skewed perspective that everything (including your happiness) depends on him being a “good” child.

Chapter 12: Being a Free Parent

Be the parent God has freed you to be.

- Focus on being godly parents (in constant pursuit of His guidance) instead of wanting godly kids.
- Those who hold on to the illusion of control (especially over people) lose the enjoyment of freedom.
- Parenting is not meant to cripple you with insufficiency, but to lead you to God's sufficiency.
- Parenting is much less about your control (less about you), and more about trusting and depending on God.
- Acknowledge that you can't directly change your child's heart or behavior. You can be intentional, but you can't assuredly be perfect and always effective.