



## Teaching the Way of Love

Parenting With the Heart of Christ

For all parents  
with young adults.



*Then he said, "A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. The younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance... When he had freely spent everything he found himself in dire need. Coming to his senses he thought, 'I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion.*

*~Luke 15: 11-20*

**S**poiler alert; no matter how hard you try to guide your children through life and prepare their way to Heaven, your children are going to falter and disappoint you. They are going to exercise their free will and make choices that will make the hair on the back of your neck stand up. Despite your guidance and example, they may hang with undesirable friends, experiment with drugs and alcohol and/or become sexually active well before marriage. In some cases, the consequences from their poor choices may be minor and easily corrected. But in others, the results may be life-altering.

This reality – that every child is capable of sinning – causes parents to worry, lose sleep and feel totally helpless. Sin wounds human nature and injures a family's harmony. It leads to isolation rather than unity and that can result in suspicion, doubt and secrecy. Sin has the power to separate a child from the love of a mother and father. It is real and its impact can be frightening.

Everyone knows that sin causes pain, but few people actually know what sin is or why it is so deadly. Sin is an offense against God. It turns one's heart away from God and His love. Bad things are bound to happen when a person is separated from God who is the source of true love. The demise may not be immediate but it is inevitable.

If sin is the path to agony, why do we continue to do what is against God's will? The simple answer is we have a fallen nature. Our fallen nature is the consequence of original sin which makes us prefer ourselves and our ways to God's love and his ways. It makes us think that we can find what is right and good all by ourselves. God becomes unnecessary because we think we already have the right answers. Acting without God's guidance

moves us away from what is best for us. When we choose to place ourselves over God or do things against God, we sin.

Our fallen nature clouds our reasoning and distorts our ability to see an action for what it really is. Instead of perceiving sin as something deadly, we see sin as attractive and fun. This is called temptation; the act of enticement; the promise of a sheep that is really a wolf. It is the first step towards sin; the step that the devil hopes we will take. Just read the first three chapters of the Bible to see how the devil deceived our first parents in this way. If Adam and Eve could fall, so can we.

It is unrealistic to think that you are going to stop your child from making mistakes and from going against what is right and good. But it is absolutely realistic to think that you can moderate the magnitude of any mistakes through guidance and resolve. The goal is not to cover up the sin or deny that sin is possible. The goal is to address the sin and, by doing so, identify the life lesson that God intends you and your child to learn. By doing so, you help your child bear the fruit of personal responsibility and self-discipline.

One last point should be made. Parents must also remember that when a child falls, they must be there to help them get back up and move forward on the right path. Parents must never abandon their children, especially when times become rough and life stops making sense. It is exactly at this moment that parents must fortify themselves with the strength and power of God so that they love the sinner and detest the sin. Yes, they will falter. And, yes, you will help pull them through the darkness. God is counting on you to bring them back into his love and light.

**F**rom the DVD (WATCH THE CLIP THAT CORRESPONDS WITH THIS SEGMENT.)

When your children falter, it is your job to help \_\_\_\_\_ fix the problem. It is not your job to \_\_\_\_\_ the behavior or make it \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ an issue as soon as you can keeps a behavior from becoming a \_\_\_\_\_. You can do this by:

- Knowing what is happening in your child's life. \_\_\_\_\_ your child's activities in school and with friends.
- Addressing any situation where there is a concern by asking these questions  
"\_\_\_\_\_ got you into this situation?" "\_\_\_\_\_ did you get off track?"  
"\_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_ fix this?"

Be prepared to do the following:

Let your child \_\_\_\_\_ the problem.

Remain \_\_\_\_\_ that your child can find a moral solution to the problem.

\_\_\_\_\_ at your child's side for support.

Be available to \_\_\_\_\_. Be \_\_\_\_\_ for your child.

## **C**ontinue the Discussion

**Read and reflect on the following questions and examples.**

1. What are some of the common mistakes that youth make today in each of these situations: with friends, with media use, at school?
2. What is the difference between a pattern and an event? How does this difference relate to mistakes?
3. Can parents still trust their youth AND monitor what they do? Explain.
4. Why is it acceptable to let young people feel uncomfortable when they are trying to figure out solutions to their problems?
5. How might the following actions done by you hinder a young person's ability to correct a problem: belittling, getting angry, walking away from the issue, suggesting solutions, being impatient?

# Make a Plan

## For The Parent

Proactive parents have up-to-date information about their child's activities. They know who they are hanging with, what classes they are taking and how they are doing, and they have full access to what their child is doing on-line. This information can reduce the mistakes your child makes and minimize any suffering that may result for either of you.

And, this information will be needed if your child develops a pattern of sinful behavior. It will provide you with the connections you need to love your child and detest the sin. For more information on how to correct sinful behavior, go back and reread the **Necessary Conversations** segment.

The worksheet below is an information template that every parent should be able to fill out completely. Take the time to enter in the current information about your young adult. If you have any missing information, get it from your child.

Who are my child's teachers, coaches, supervisors?

Name	Relationship	Email Address	Phone Number

Who are my child's friends?

Name	Parent's Name	Email Address of Parent	Phone Number

What social media sites is my child using?

Site	Username	Password

One final comment: If your child has a cell phone and is using it to text, it is important that you can retrieve their text messages. Check with your mobile provider on what spyware software they have or check out programs like Unfiltered by CovenantEyes®, TextGuard™ and My Mobile Watchdog™. If your child is spending time texting, it is very possible that they have a life that you know nothing about. This can lead to mistakes that can result in major suffering.

# Make a Plan

## For The Student

There is an old adage: “mistakes are inevitable but suffering is optional.” You can’t stop the mistakes, but you can minimize the suffering they cause because mistakes and suffering are two separate things. One does not have to lead to the next – especially if you stay connected to your parents.

Your parents should have up-to-date information about your activities. They should know who you are hanging with, what classes you are taking and how you are doing, and they should have full access to what you are doing on-line.

While this may seem invasive, especially as you stretch toward adulthood, your parents need to know these things in order to help you. By keeping the communication lines open to your parents, you will make fewer mistakes and reduce your suffering.

The worksheet below will keep your parents in the loop. Take the time to enter in your current information. Be ready to share this information with your parent(s).

Who are my teachers, coaches, supervisors?

Name	Relationship	Email Address	Phone Number

Who are my friends?

Name	Parent’s Name	Email Address of Parent	Phone Number

What social media sites am I using?

Site	Username	Password

What email accounts do I have? List them in order of use (most used on top).


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