

Session 1: Experience Isn't Everything

Key Points: *The Pressure to participate in activities should not be allowed to govern your parenting to the point it detracts from your ability to develop a strong relationship with your child.

*Children can grow up experience poor and still thrive as adults, but children who grow up relationship poor do not possess the emotional freedom to explore their life's full potential.

In our culture, parents can feel tremendous pressure to give their kids the right "package" of experiences to help them get ahead in life. We go to great lengths to give them the best education available. But it doesn't stop there. We arrange our schedules around a myriad of practices, performances, games, and gatherings-all in an effort to create the ultimate experience for our children.

As society advances, the list of new activities expands. Forty years ago, Little League Baseball stood unchallenged as the sport of choice for young children. Today's parents must choose from soccer, karate, hockey, gymnastics, swimming, fast pitch softball, and other programs that offer advanced leagues with the dream of Olympic gold and a jump-start on life. Over the years, these programs have grown in their sophistication and appeal

To a large extent, we've come to believe that the key to success is finding our child's niche in the right combination of sports and/or art programs. There is a tendency to think that forgoing an activity might mean depriving your child of the opportunity of a lifetime.

While childhood experiences are important, something else is even more important. As we'll discover in this session and in the weeks to come, an experience-rich childhood is no guarantee of a rich childhood.

EXERCISE: Is Experience Truly the Best Teacher?

1. In the Column A below, list the various activities that you participated in as a child. In column B, list the key people who have impacted your life. Evaluate the importance of the activities versus the relationships in preparing you for adulthood. Share your thoughts with the group. Which column has had the greatest impact on you in your adulthood?

<u>Column A</u> Childhood Activities	<u>Column B</u> Key Relationships

*IT IS NOT WHAT A PERSON DOES , BUT WHO HE IS, THAT GIVES HIM VALUE"

Discussion Questions:

1. Why are parents today so prone to making their families experientially rich and relationally poor?

2. As you look back, how would you desire your childhood? Experientially or relationally rich or poor? Why?

3. What experiences have your children had that you never had? Is that important to you and why?

4. Where do you go for parenting advice?

5. As you look at your parenting styles, are you more experiential or more relational?

6. If your children's experiences outweigh your time with them, what changes need to be made to reverse the trend?

Assignment for the week:

1. This week, observe your family's schedule. Approximately how many hours are dedicated to focused training in education, athletics, art and other extracurricular activities?
2. Approximately how many hours are dedicated to focused relationship building-talking, playing games together, family activities, or just listening to each other?

Week 2: The Spiritual Dial:

As we discovered already, the experiences we gain in childhood are not as important as the relationships that accompany them. Your child's experience in Little League may pave the way to a career as a professional athlete, but the intricate tapestry of relationships in his life will determine how well he manages his opportunities as an adult. Whether we play sports or take piano lessons, it's the people in our lives that have the deepest impact. In fact, the value of any experience in life is directly proportional to the value of the relationships we encounter as a result of that experience.

There are three specific types of relationships that determine how well a child is equipped to face life. Success in adulthood is largely determined by the quality and function of these three relationship types. If there is a deficit in any one of these areas during childhood, there is usually a corresponding deficiency in adulthood. Most people would agree that their greatest accomplishments and regrets in life were greatly impacted by the presence or absence of healthy activity in these three relationships.

During the fleeting window of time called parenthood, you have a unique opportunity to influence the quality of these three relationships in your child’s life. In reality, no one else can provide the guidance your child needs in these areas like you, his parent. That’s why experience is no substitute for your stewardship of the relationships in your child’s life. In this session, we will uncover the three crucial types of relationships and discuss how you can begin to dial them in and out of your child’s life to prepare him to be all God intends him to be in adulthood.

Exercise 1: Name that Relationship:

In column A below, list your three greatest accomplishment or retreat in life. Beside each one in column B, list the relationships that were most influential in each experience. In Column C, briefly describe how each relationship impacted your accomplishment or regret. :

A Accomplishment/Regret	B Key Relationships	C How Impacted

1. Do you agree that most of your experiences are related to your relationships?
2. Do you think many of your choices are based on what you learned or didn’t learn from these relationships?
3. As you think back on your childhood, what was the setting on the three different relational dials?
4. Do you look back on your relationship with your parents with regret or relief?
5. Looking back to your childhood, are there people you regret meeting? Are there people you wish you met sooner?
6. How did the three relationships shape you? How are they shaping your children?

7. In what ways are you intentionally working to enhance your relationship with your children?

Three Main Questions:

8. What do I want my student to become? Proverbs 3:5-6

9. Where are they right now?

10. How can I help them to take the next step?

KEY POINTS:

*There are three specific types of relationships-God, Parents, and those outside the home- that determine how well a child is equipped to face life.

*As parents, we have a window of opportunity to impact the quality of these relationships in our child's life.

WHAT WILL YOU DO? (ASSIGNMENT FOR THE WEEK)

This week, observe the various relationships in your child's life. On a scale of 1-10, (10 being the strongest), where is the dial currently set for each of the three key types of relationships?

1. Child's Relationship with God:

2. Child's Relationship with Parents:

3. Child's Relationship with other outside the home:

*Scripture commands parents to train their children. In the space below, list some specific ways you can begin to influence the key relationships in your child's life.

1. Ways to influence my child's relationship with God:

2. Ways to influence my child's relationship with me as a parent:

3. Ways to influence my child's relationship with others outside the home:

Memory Verse for the week: Teach this memory verse to your family this week!

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Proverbs 3:5-6

Week 3: The Big “I”:

Your effectiveness as a parent is entirely dependent on your ability to maintain influence in your child’s life. Influence is everything. In the early years, your size and position make it easy to exert influence over your child. You have the final say in virtually every decision in life. But somewhere between toddlerhood and the teenage years, a shift takes place. And if you don’t also make a shift in your parenting methods, you may find yourself having lost the influence you need to parent your child effectively.

Our children need us the most during the critical decisions in their lives—decisions about school, career, dating, morality, and marriage. But sadly many parents find themselves with the least amount of influence during those crucial years. To make matters worse, their efforts to correct the problem often erode the relationship even further. It doesn’t have to be that way. God has a plan to help you develop a rich, lasting relationship with your child that will enable you to be an invaluable influence during the defining moments in his life.

Exercise The Moment of Truth:

Whether they know it or not, our children will need us most in the decisions that matter most. But by the time they’re old enough to face those decisions, they’re also old enough to choose whether or not they want our input. So how are we doing? If your child had to make an important decision today, would you be someone he truly depended on to help him? Be honest. In the space below, list the top five people you think your child would turn to if making an important life decision today.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

“OUR CHILDREN WILL NEED US MOST IN THE DECISIONS THAT MATTER MOST.”

Discussion Questions: Take a few moments to discuss your answers to these questions with the group.

1. Why do parents tend to lead by size and position instead of by relationship?
2. How did your parents’ influence affect your moral choices?
3. Did your parents or the parents of your friends ever try to “jump in late”? What was the outcome?
4. At what age should your children move from being parented by authority to being parented by influence?
5. How are you investing in your relationship with your children?
6. In what ways have you nurtured or nourished your children?
7. How does a parent’s relationship with his child impact the child’s emotional well-being?
8. How did your relationship with your parents impact your other relationships?
9. What things did your parents prioritize over their relationship with you?
10. What are your children seeing in you that is impacting their relationships?
11. What are you doing to undermine your relationship with your child?
12. What needs to change in order for you to prioritize your relationships with your children?

KEY POINTS:

- *The quality of your relationship with your children will determine the weight of your influence.
- *In the early years of parenting, influence is based on the parent’s size and position.
- *Your children need your influence the most when they make the decisions that matter the most.
- *To exasperate your child means to abuse your size or position
- *There comes a time in parenting when control is no longer the objective
- *Exasperation erodes relationships and destroys the leverage of influence

Read Ephesians 6:4

Decisions I Made	My Parent’s Influence
	A. I desired/sought my parent’s advice B. I thought briefly about what my parents would say or do C. I didn’t think to ask them D. They wouldn’t have understood E. I didn’t desire their opinion on the matter
	A. I desired/sought my parent’s advice B. I thought briefly about what my parents would say or do C. I didn’t think to ask them D. They wouldn’t have understood E. I didn’t desire their opinion on the matter
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***Read John 15:15**

1. How does Jesus demonstrate the transition from control to influence with His spiritual children?
2. According to John 15:15b, what task did Jesus complete that marked the disciples’ transition from servants to friends?
3. Using this example as a model for your parenting, what needs to take place in order for you to transition from control to influence?

TWO KEY FACTS:

- *When it matters most, the quality of your relationship with your children will determine the weight of your influence.**
- *Your relationships with your children will impact the quality of their future relationships.**

Week 4: Out of Control:

In the early stages of parenting, control is critical. The toddler years are enough to convince any parent that controlling your child is a prerequisite for raising him to adulthood. As a result, many parents draw the simplistic conclusion that if they can just control their children, then everything will work out. But in an effort to maintain control, many parents make a tragic mistake that undermines their effectiveness during the crucial later years.

You may have the world's greatest relationship with your child. Your child may have a fantastic relationship with God. But there's one more dial in your child's life that has the power to change everything: FRIENDS. In fact, friends influence the quality and direction of our lives. Often the greatest successes and the biggest regrets of our lives are directly influenced by our friends. Startlingly, a friend has more potential to influence a person's decisions than either his parents or God. It's easy for parents to overlook this category. We tend to think that friends are naturally drawn toward the people that are like them and away from those that are different. We think that friendships follow a natural progression and therefore harmless. But you can and should influence the choices your child makes in the area of friendships.

EXERCISES:

To practice recognizing the difference between parenting by control and parenting by influence, circle one word in column B to indicate which approach is the appropriate method for the corresponding situation in Column A.

A (Situation)	B (Parenting Method)	
Selecting a Pediatrician	Control	Influence
Completing Homework	Control	Influence
Choosing a college to attend	Control	Influence
Choosing a Spouse	Control	Influence

“HE WHO DEALS WITH AN OPEN HAND BEARS MORE INFLUENCE THAN ONE WHO RULES WITH A TIGHT GRIP.”

EXERCISE 2:

Replacement Parts: In session 2, you listed your three greets accomplishments or regrets in life and identified the relationships that were most influential in shaping those experiences. For this exercise, you will have the opportunity to go back in time and dial out the unwanted influences. In Column A below, list your three or four greets regrets in life. In column B, write the name of a friend you wish had been more influential in your life at that time:

A (Regret)	B (Replacement Friend)

Questions:

1. Read Proverbs 13:20 again. How have you seen this principle played out?

2. What is one positive and one negative example of how your friends determined the direction and quality of your life?

3. Who is influencing your children now?

4. Are there people who need to be dialed in or out your children's lives? How would you suggest doing this?

5. How are you investing in the relationships that will influence your children?

6. Are there other adults saying the same things you are saying?

KEY FACTS:

- *What am I doing to enhance my relationship with my student?
-Don't need to economize time with my student- spend the time

- *What am I doing to advance my students relationship with God?
-nothing more important than they will understand to know how important to have a personal relationship with Christ and nobody to influence them more than parents

- *What am I doing to influence my students relationships with people outside the home?
-What am i doing to turn the dial on friendships and relationships are people that we are influencing.