



Parents, Wake Up!

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Don and Janet Wilson

*Your intentional parenting has raised
two beautiful Christian daughters,
Terri and Kasey,
to glorify God.*

*Thank you for being sources
of encouragement.*







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Ten Commandments for Parents

1. THOU SHALT remember your children are a gift from God to be reared for His glory.
2. THOU SHALT love your children unconditionally at all times.
3. THOU SHALT bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
4. THOU SHALT be an example to your children in every aspect of life.
5. THOU SHALT communicate openly with your children, always listening to their point of view.
6. THOU SHALT never abuse or neglect your children but practice positive discipline.
7. THOU SHALT instill moral and ethical values in your children's hearts.
8. THOU SHALT let your children see that your marriage is a priority based on love and respect for your spouse.
9. THOU SHALT lead your children in developing faith, spiritual values, and commitment to Christ.
10. THOU SHALT never give up on your children; parenting is a lifetime commitment.

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Ten Commandments for Children

1. THOU SHALT honor your parents. God has commanded this practice.
2. THOU SHALT remember you are the child; your father and mother are the parents.
3. THOU SHALT respect the authority God has given your parents.
4. THOU SHALT not belittle, curse, or slander your parents.
5. THOU SHALT believe your parents know and want what is best for you.
6. THOU SHALT understand that your parents sometimes have to say no.
7. THOU SHALT love your parents.
8. THOU SHALT obey your parents.
9. THOU SHALT do your share of chores around the house.
10. THOU SHALT listen attentively to your parents.

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Introduction

Surprise! Parenting is not about the children. It is about the parents. That is why we call it parenting, not childrening.

Ten Observations

1. Parents need to be in control of self before they are able to control their children.
2. Parents need to lead self in a cool, calm, and collected way before they can lead their children.
3. Parents are responsible for how they parent their children; it is not the children's responsibility.
4. Parenting is a learned skill, not luck.
5. Parenting is a responsibility given by God.
6. Parenting responsibilities cannot be transferred.
7. Parenting is hard work: 24/7/365.
8. Parenting must be intentional to be successful.
9. This book is about parents and parenting.
10. It is time for parents to wake up!

Waiting for the Prodigal to Come Home

All across the nation the porch light is on,
And the covers are turned back.
Parents are waiting for the doorbell to ring,
Or maybe a text message from their
Children who have gone into a "far country."

Hands are being wrung and tears are flowing
As the proverbial questions are being asked
Over and over, "What did we do wrong?"
"Where is he, has something happened
To Johnny?" "What can we do?"



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The reality is that parents cannot reparent
Their children, but they can turn a new
Page from this day forward, starting with
Consistent and constant prayer for prodigal
Children and grandchildren.

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CHAPTER

1

Wake Up To Essential Fundamentals

*“The fathers have eaten sour grapes,
And the children’s teeth are set on edge.”*
—Ezekiel 18:2

A Parent, a Perpetrator

The front-page picture of a beautiful family and headline on the *USA Today*, September 12–14, 2014, issue (pages 1A, 8A), heralded what most of us already know. Parenting in our country is in a crisis. The caption read, “Parents Who Kill Their Children.” The chilling subline read, “Majority of Victims under 5; Men More Likely to Murder.”

The well-written and researched article was shocking. Note carefully:

A *USA Today* examination of more than three decades of FBI homicide data shows that on an average, 450 children are killed every year by their parents. Northeastern University criminologists applied statistical models to the records. *USA Today* analyzed the database for a detailed look at who kills, who is killed, and how. Several patterns are apparent:



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- The vast majority of child victims—three out of four—are under 5. More than a third of all victims are under a year.
- Nearly all the victims died from physical beatings or other injuries at a parent's hands.
- Fathers are more likely to kill. Men killed six out of ten children . . . When mothers kill, they are far more likely to kill victims under the age of one than children of any other age.

The article goes on to present profiles of parents who kill their children, as well as possible causes:

Psychiatrists and criminologists say parents who kill their children tend to fit one of four categories:

- A parent suffering a psychotic break.
- A parent who thinks he is killing out of altruism because he doesn't want a child to grow up without him.
- A parent acting out of revenge against a spouse or partner.
- A parent who kills from neglect or by recklessness.

Even though this article is dramatic, this is not going to be a book about killing children. The newspaper article serves as a wake-up call about the need for better loving and parenting skills in our society.

Expertise of Experience

Thank you for taking the time to see what this, my fifth wake-up book, is about. If any group needs a wake-up call, it is parents. I promise you that the work you hold in your hand is not just another book on parenting. I have written it after fifty years of marriage to my wife Isabel. Together, we have reared two children into adulthood and are blessed with four grandchildren. I have counseled families and parents for forty years, having served as the editor of *Christian Family Magazine* for five years. I have two graduate degrees in the field of counseling. This is my third book on marriage and the family, and marks my hundred-and-first book. No, I'm not



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claiming to be an expert on parenting, just a parent with experience.

Parents, Wake Up! is exactly what the title suggests—a wake-up call for parents to become intentional in their parenting. I find it is ironic that one of the most responsible tasks in the world—parenting—requires no experience. After nine months of waiting, a set of parents have a precious, one-of-a-kind gift of life—a baby—placed in their hands. They embark on a journey of eighteen years or more in which they will mold a precious soul for time and eternity. Amazing! What a responsibility with consequences in both now and forever.

Who Packed Your Baggage?

How shall we parent this precious gift from God? is the question every parent should ask and answer. Some new parents have spent time in parenting classes and others in reading books and watching media presentations about marriage and parenting. Sadly, some have just waited the nine months resenting the coming of the child. They haven't made any preparation for the awesome task of parenting.

No matter how prospective parents approach their responsibility, all of them have one thing in common. They bring to parenting the baggage that was packed during the years they were growing up. Their perceptions range from A to Z, their experiences from negative to positive. I have definite convictions about parenting. Don't you? Of course! We all do.

Some new parents vow from the beginning that they will not practice their parents' style of parenting. If anything, they will do just the opposite. Others determine to adopt their parents' style. A conflict will arise when each parent brings a different experience to the new parenting responsibilities.



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Self-Centered or Child-Centered

The first two years of parenting are the most difficult, as the new parents adjust from being self-centered to child-centered. Parenting approaches will range from trial and error and haphazard, to by the book, to guessing, to advice from friends, or to who knows where.

The worst time to learn how to swim is when you are going down for the third time. The worst time to purchase fire insurance is when your house is on fire. Conversely, it is not too late to learn and practice biblical parenting principles after the children are on the scene. That's what this book is about: selecting a parenting principle and practicing it with intent.

This book is not about the psychology of parenting; it is not about potty training, feeding, natal care, or dealing with temper tantrums and sibling rivalry. It is about the fundamentals that are essential for effective parenting, fundamentals that are Bible based. It is upon these principles that additional parenting studies are based. Parenting begins with parents, not with the children.

Intentional parenting is the opposite of random, haphazard, or guesswork parenting. It is a deliberate learning and practicing of biblical and proven parenting principles. This book is more than just another quick read about parenting and passing judgment on its contents. This is a workbook for serious parents who will not leave to chance the growth of the precious soul God entrusted to their care. The only place you find success before work is in the dictionary.

Prevent Weeping Parent Syndrome

Parenting has faced tough times from the day Adam and Eve—God's children—rebelled against the Father's commandment to the weeping parent today who filed a report on a runaway daughter. Almost every day we read or hear news accounts of crimes being committed against



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parents by children and crimes being committed by parents against children.

Christian families aren't exempt from parenting problems and crises. Parenting issues are at the top of the list of tasks that take up a great deal of the preacher's and elders' time in the local church. Parents need a wake-up call.

This book is not designed to spoon feed you. You must take time to think, dig into scripture, and make application of the materials. The Bible calls this being doers of the word (James 1:22–25). I suggest that parents set aside some prime time every day—at least every week—to study this material prayerfully. It is ideal for group or class study.

Even teenagers need to study this material, and so do grandparents.



One-Hundred-One Wake-up Questions for Focusing on Parenting



The following questions are designed to draw our minds to our studies. They are wake-up questions. After spending time seriously reviewing these questions, your mind will be open and receptive to this study. Obviously, to get maximum benefits from this exercise, you need to answer the questions in written form privately or in discussion form in a class. Reading them to yourself and answering them silently will be of little benefit. Some of the questions are future-directed, but try to project an answer anyway.

1. When your children are grown, what will they remember the most about your parenting style?
2. What do you remember the most about your parents' parenting style?





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3. What impact do you think the quality of your marriage is having on your children?
4. If you fail as a parent, who or what will be the reason?
5. How are you presently working to improve your parenting skills?
6. How in agreement are you and your spouse relative to handling most parenting issues?
7. What do you think is the most positive aspect of your parenting style?
8. How would your children evaluate your handling of conflict in your home?
9. How healthy is the emotional climate in your home?
10. Do you believe without any doubt that God is pleased with your parenting style?
11. What parenting issues are never resolved in an effective way?
12. Name two couples whose parenting skills you admire and why.
13. How open are you to making changes in your parenting style?
14. What issue from your past influences your parenting practices today?





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15. What is the level of acceptance, appreciation, friendship, laughter, flexibility, forgiveness, and open-mindedness in your home and parenting practices?
16. How are your day-to-day parenting practices affecting the happiness of your family?
17. What does the ideal parenting image look like in your mind?
18. If you continue to parent as you are now are doing, what do you project the outcome will be?
19. How are your parenting assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes impacting the state of your marriage?
20. As your children are watching your marriage practices, what major lessons are they learning?
21. If your “dream” of a better parenting style could become a reality, what would it look like?
22. How do you and your spouse negotiate your differences and setbacks into positive solutions?
23. What makes you think, if you do, that you don’t need to adjust, change, revive, or improve your parenting practices?
24. How do you use the Bible to gain insight and motivation to be a better parent?
25. How involved are your children in your marriage and how does it impact your parenting practices?





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26. What influence does a spouse's parents' past abusive behavior—use of alcohol or drugs—have on your parenting practices today? What about your abusive usage?
27. What makes you think your parenting practices are normal or above average?
28. How do you prevent “enmeshment”—trying to get every family to clone each other—from occurring in your family?
29. What role does fear contribute to your parenting attitudes and practices?
30. What are your biggest fears relative to parenting your children?
31. What are your three most pressing parenting issues?
32. What role should your parents have in the lives of your children?
33. What is the number one parenting mistake you think parents are making?
34. What does this statement mean: Children do as they see, not as they are told?
35. What examples and behaviors from your lifestyle do you see in your children's personalities and behavior?



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36. What are some of the major parenting lessons your children are getting from your parenting practices?
37. What qualities from your parents' lifestyle and parenting practices do you see in your life?
38. How do you use "labels" and "name calling" in your parenting practices?
39. What discussions do you have with your children about various parenting issues and needs?
40. What are your prayer practices relative to your need for help in parenting your children?
41. What are your parenting expectations and how are you meeting them?
42. How do you think Satan is trying to create problems between you and your children? Your spouse?
43. If you have more than one child, how do your children's differences affect your parenting?
44. How is your parenting style contributing to your child's healthy identity and self-esteem?
45. How do you say no and stick with it?
46. What are some challenges single parents must face?
47. How do you monitor your child's relationship with his/her peers?





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48. How balanced is your child's emotional health based on your parenting practices?
49. How open are you to counseling to help you cope with tough problems?
50. How does a strong marriage contribute to a strong and healthy family?
51. How do you work through differences with your spouse and family members?
52. How do you deal with outside forces that seek to undermine your parenting influence?
53. How intentional is your parenting style?
54. How do you avoid creating an entitlement attitude in your children?
55. What kind of relationship do you have with your in-laws?
56. Why are the first two years of parenting the most stressful?
57. How do you balance your work demands on the job with your parenting responsibilities?
58. How did having your first child impact your relationship with your spouse?
59. How much time do you and your spouse spend nurturing your marital relationship?





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60. How do you make your spouse feel loved and special?
61. How did your parents show their love for each other?
62. How do you help your children socialize in positive ways?
63. How dependent are you on your spouse?
64. Why do some parents try to live vicariously through their children?
65. How does your parenting style create trust?
66. How do you help your spouse feel better when he/she is upset or worried?
67. How do you add value to your spouse?
68. What are some of the challenges faced by a blended family?
69. How are you educating your children in the handling of finances and money issues?
70. What are your attitudes and beliefs about divorce as a solution to marital and parenting issues?
71. How are you helping your children learn God's will for their lives?
72. How often have you and your spouse discussed getting a divorce?





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73. How would you evaluate your communication skills and effectiveness?
74. How much freedom do your children have to express themselves?
75. How do you celebrate holidays, birthdays, and other special occasions?
76. How does your family make decisions?
77. How much value is given to opinions in your family?
78. How much freedom do your children have relative to sharing their feelings about an issue?
79. What three things should parents expect from their children?
80. What three things should children expect from their parents?
81. How do you respond to your child who is an “under-achiever”?
82. How are you providing a safe environment for your children?
83. How do you help your children when they are feeling down or like losers?
84. What is the best parenting advice you’ve ever been given and by whom?





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85. When is it serious for a parent and child to keep secrets from each other?
86. How do you discuss issues such as life, death, and beyond with your children?
87. What image do you believe your children have of you as a parent?
88. In your opinion what causes children to stop listening to their parents?
89. How do you encourage your children to ask meaningful questions?
90. What conversations have you had with your parents about how they raised you?
91. How has your perception of your role as a parent changed over the years? Why?
92. When your parents have a crisis, how do you respond?
93. How can being busy contribute to parents overlooking the needs of their children and spouse?
94. How do you filter the media materials to which your children are exposed?
95. How careful are you in criticizing your children when they have done something wrong?
96. How do you avoid leaving the impression of "I'm perfect" or "I'm always right"?





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97. How will you “let go” of your children when it comes time for them to leave home?
98. What issues do you tend to avoid if at all possible?
99. What is the best compliment your children have ever given you?
100. How do you daily glorify God in your parenting style?
101. What are your thoughts about someday being a grandparent?

These questions may tend to intimidate, but keep in mind they are designed to be thought provoking and call certain parenting strengths and weakness to our attention.



Application

1. Which three questions are most challenging for you?

2. How many of these questions have you answered?
3. What additional observations do you have?
4. What one intentional thing will you do because of this lesson?





CHAPTER

2

Wake Up To Intentional Parenting

As Fred and Julie sat in the counselor's office, a somber shadow created a look of pain on their young faces. The presenting reason for seeing a family counselor was stated on their intake form as follows:

We are at our wit's end in trying to be good parents. Our son Tyler, age 9, is so precious and we love him more than words can say. We are trying to do everything right but his behavior seems to be getting worse. We continually read parenting books, attend seminars, and watch experts on TV. We feel like jugglers in a circus with more and more balls being added. We can't do it all; we are overwhelmed with all the advice. We need something simple and practical that we can use to parent our son more effectively.

Defining Intentional

Is there an easier, more manageable way to parent than by knee-jerk? Yes! It is *intentional parenting*. What do I mean by intentional parenting? Webster gives the following definitions to help us clarify what we mean by intentional:

- Intent (adj.) 1) firmly directed or fixed; earnest; intense . . . strongly resolved.