



# Shepherding a Child's Heart

PARENT'S HANDBOOK

T E D D   T R I P P



A Shepherding the Heart Resource



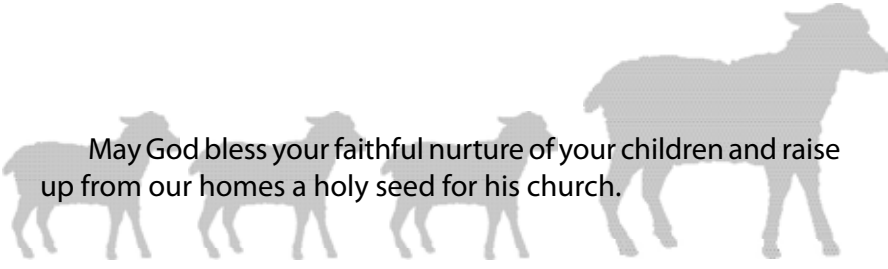
*Shepherding a  
Child's Heart*

# **Parent's Handbook**

by Tedd Tripp



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May God bless your faithful nurture of your children and raise up from our homes a holy seed for his church.

Tedd Tripp

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Teaching thousands of young parents in hundreds of seminars, listening to their questions and sharing their life experience has focused the content of this Parent's Handbook. I have gained a sharper focus on both the conceptual and cultural challenges confronting parents who are earnest about shepherding the hearts of their children.

As I have had five more years to think about this topic, many insights and Scriptural applications have come to mind. One of the joys of Bible study is that one never plumbs the depths of the Word of God; there are always new implications and applications of rich biblical truth. If I were writing *Shepherding a Child's Heart* today, the truths in the book could be more fully developed through insights I have gained in the past five years.

I had originally planned to call this book a study guide, but as I worked on it and it began to take shape I realized that it was really a parent's handbook. While it is designed to be used alongside *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, it does more than simply rehearse the material in the book. It will lead you into deeper understanding of the biblical concepts that are spelled out in *Shepherding*. If you, like so many, have desired to gain a richer and deeper understanding of the scriptural call to shepherding your child's heart, then I offer this Parent's Handbook as a way to strengthen your grasp of biblical principles of child rearing.

Shepherding a Child's Heart: Parent's Handbook is unusual, so some explanation is in order. I did not want to write a fill-in-the-blank study guide that simply rehearsed the material in the book. What I have sought to do is deepen the content and application of Shepherding a Child's Heart. Many of the questions in this book are not about the content of Shepherding a Child's Heart, but rather about the meaning and application of Scripture texts to the challenges of shepherding children.

Here is what you will find inside.

**THE BIG IDEA** This section is simply a summary of the portion of Shepherding a Child's Heart that is under discussion. In each case the appropriate chapters from Shepherding are noted.

**DIGGING INTO THE WORD** Here I have provided many passages of Scripture that will provide insight and understanding as you seek to understand your parenting task. The questions in this section are designed to direct your thinking and reasoning through the passages under examination.

**APPLICATION** This section does exactly what the name implies; it leads into application of the biblical principles and concepts that bear on your parenting task.

**STRATEGIC QUESTIONS** These questions are designed to help parents commit to change in any areas in which change would make them more biblical, Christ-centered parents. This section is designed to help you avoid the frequent problem of gaining insight without ever making the life changing decisions that move insight into lifestyle.

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS** This is the "where do I find the strength to do this" section. In each concluding thoughts segment I have sought to encourage parents from the scriptures that all the



## **THE BIG IDEA**

The heart is the control center of life. All behavior flows from the heart. This is why Jesus says, “For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45). What comes out in the words and actions of your children reflect the abundance of their hearts. Correction and discipline, therefore, must be concerned with heart issues. Your concern is to unmask your child’s sin, helping him to understand how it reflects a heart that has strayed. Cor-

# **CHAPTER 1**

## Getting to the Heart of Behavior

3. The Bible is robust and sufficient. It gives you all the categories of thought you need to understand and evaluate behavior. From the list of Scripture texts below identify the heart issues that inevitably lead to sin.

Romans 12:19 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 29:25 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 10:4 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 56:3,4,11 \_\_\_\_\_

Deuteronomy 7:25 \_\_\_\_\_

Ecclesiastes 4:4 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 10:12 \_\_\_\_\_

James 3:14,16 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 17:10 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 5:17 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Corinthians 3:1,3 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Corinthians 10:14 \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 3:14 \_\_\_\_\_

The passages listed above are only suggestive, not exhaustive. Develop a notebook in which you collect the attitudes of heart that the Bible uses to describe things that motivate behavior. Write the texts that describe these heart attitudes. Think of stories in the Scripture that can illustrate these character qualities both positively and negatively. Show how they work out in the lives of Bible characters. Hezekiah, for example, could be enlisted as an illustration of pride.

rection provides opportunities to show the glories of God who sent His Son to change hearts and free people enslaved to sin.

This chapter discusses the information found in Chapter 1 of *Shepherding a Child's Heart*.

### DIGGING INTO THE WORD

1. God is concerned with heart issues. Make notes on the following passages. How do they show God's focus on the heart?

Proverbs 4:23 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Deuteronomy 10:12 \_\_\_\_\_

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Jeremiah 17:10 \_\_\_\_\_

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Luke 12:34 \_\_\_\_\_

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2. To shepherd your child's heart into a biblical understanding of behavior, you must know the terms the Bible uses to describe the thoughts and purposes of the heart. Look up and write out Hebrews 4:12.

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2. Why is changed behavior not an adequate goal in correction?

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3. Note what these passages say about behavior change that is not tied to heart change.

Matthew 15:8 \_\_\_\_\_

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Matthew 23:25–28 \_\_\_\_\_

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4. How does understanding that behavior is only a reflection of the attitudes of the heart change the focus in correction and discipline?

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Look at the list of heart attitudes above and think of biblical terms that describe the opposite quality. For example, opposite hatred, place love. In your notebook generate a list of contrasting attitudes of heart. Train yourself and your children to think and speak of motivation using biblical terminology.

When we assign terms to heart attitudes that are not biblical terms, we move our thinking away from the Bible as a means of understanding our motives and attitudes. For example, what does a person mean when he describes himself as frustrated? Does he mean angry, or something different? No passages of Scripture speak to frustration because it is not a biblical term. Until we identify those feelings with biblical terminology, we cannot use the Bible to understand them.

The purpose for describing the attitudes of heart that motivate behavior is not to assign motives to your child with greater precision. Never use these insights from Scripture to club your child with his failure and inner wickedness. The reason to hone your understanding of these biblical terms is to enable you to help your child understand how the Scriptures describe the things that motivate what he says and does. You are using your knowledge to increase his sensitivity to and understanding of what pushes and pulls his behavior.

Your task is to explore with your child the possible motives for his actions and to help him to learn to discern what is going on within. Your integrity in dealing with these issues of motivation in your own life will both give you insight and credibility as you seek to deal with these things in your children. You can never teach what you have not learned.

## APPLICATION

1. What are some of the reasons you get sidetracked with behavior?
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5. Focusing on behavior rather than on the heart has negative results. Focus on changing behavior will tempt you to become a behaviorist. Behaviorism is the attempt to control or constrain behavior through offering negative or positive consequences. What are some of the things you have done to change behavior without focusing on heart issues?

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There are times when you must constrain behavior. For example, if your son is hitting his sister on the head with a baseball bat, you must constrain his behavior. You cannot wait for his heart to change. The behavior must be stopped. But, even when you require him to stop hurting his sister in that way, you do so in the knowledge that the problem is not necessarily addressed just because the wrong behavior has stopped. You must still explore with him the heart issues behind this wrong behavior that requires restraint.

Remember, in correction and discipline, you are interested in what is happening in the heart. How has the heart gone astray? Concern for heart issues leads to the cross of Christ. Concern for heart issues underscores the need for a Savior. It provides you with opportunities to point your children to the willing, able, powerful Savior of sinners. He is the only One who does heart transplant surgery. He removes hearts of stone and implants hearts of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26).

## STRATEGIC QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the ways that you have been a behaviorist rather than a shepherd of the heart of your child?

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2. In what ways would identifying the thoughts and intents of the heart help you to correct and discipline with a more Christ centered focus?

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3. What questions can you develop (questions that cannot be answered "yes" or "no") that will help you draw your children out in ways that focus correction and discipline on heart issues?

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7. What are some ways that you must pray for yourself and your children if you are to apply these things to your correction, discipline and motivation of your children?

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## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

You know that you are on the right track when you are trying to understand the thoughts and the motives of the heart, because this is one of the primary functions of the Bible.

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

One of the implications of this passage is that you must know the Scriptures. Unless the Word of God dwells richly in you, you will be ineffective in using it as a means of helping your children understand the overflow of their hearts.

1. Hebrews 4:12 raises this question: What are the thoughts and attitudes of your heart in correction and discipline? Make a list of wrong thoughts and attitudes of heart that may divert and confuse your focus in the discipline, correction and motivation of your children.

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4. What changes in your style of interacting with correction and discipline would help you to apply the ideas in this chapter?

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5. How should your goals in correction and discipline change?

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6. How do you need to apply these truths to your life in order to move toward your children with integrity and insight?

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2 Peter 1:3–4 \_\_\_\_\_

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2 Chronicles 16:9 \_\_\_\_\_

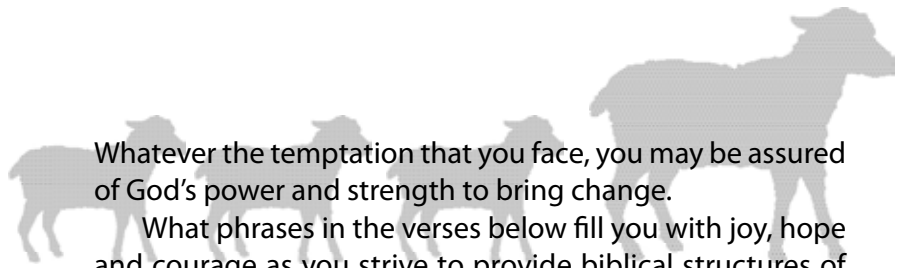
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Psalm 139:23–24 \_\_\_\_\_

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Since God has given us His Word to be a means of understanding the thoughts and attitudes of the heart, you are in sync with God's objectives as you strive to understand the overflow of the heart issues in correction and discipline. You may be assured of His help and grace as you shepherd the hearts of your children.



Whatever the temptation that you face, you may be assured of God's power and strength to bring change.

What phrases in the verses below fill you with joy, hope and courage as you strive to provide biblical structures of discipline for your children?

Ephesians 3:20 \_\_\_\_\_

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2. The temptation when you are confronted with penetrating issues from the Bible is to become discouraged and think that we can never learn to do these things, or that it will be too little, too late, or that perhaps your children are too hard.

## THE BIG IDEA

Two things contribute to the development of your child: the shaping influences of life and the Godward orientation of his heart. As a parent you must be concerned with both. You must be concerned with how you structure the shaping influences of life under your control. You must also actively shepherd the Godward orientation of your children. Your children are not neutral in this process. They are not merely the sum total of what you put into them. They interact with your shaping efforts according to the Godward commitment of their hearts. Raising children is not like operating a plastic extrusion press. Children are responders. They are active in what they become.

This chapter discusses the information found in chapters 2 & 3 of *Shepherding a Child's Heart*.

## DIGGING INTO THE WORD

### *Shaping Influences*

1. In the following passages look for evidence of God's concern with the shaping influences you provide for your children.

Genesis 18:19 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Ephesians 6:4 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Colossians 3:21 \_\_\_\_\_  
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