



# Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family

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Sometimes parents wish there was a guaranteed formula for raising good kids--a certain list of rules to follow to ensure they'd have obedient children. But if moms and dads view their role through the lens of God's grace, they will see that the gospel must first shape how they parent before they can effectively shape their children. In this highly practical book, Paul David Tripp unfolds a more biblical perspective on parenting than merely adhering to a list of rules. He lays out fourteen gospel-centered principles that will radically change the way parents think about what it means to raise up a child, informing everything they do as a parent.

## **Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family Details**

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# **From Reader Review Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family for online ebook**

**Chad Warner says**

One of the best parenting books I've read; maybe the best. Tripp explains how to deal with the heart issues that cause a child's misbehavior, because only a change of heart can lead to true, lasting behavior change. Tripp emphasizes how we must bring the Gospel into our parenting; to go beyond enforcing our authority and point to God's authority, and beyond that to His grace. There are hypothetical and actual examples to illustrate the principles.

Tripp comforts parents by telling us that our job isn't to change our child's behavior or beliefs, only to be God's instrument in caring for them as He transforms them. We expose what's bad, point to what's good, and talk about Jesus who can lead them from bad to good. Successful parenting isn't about results; it's about being faithful to our mission.

I needed to hear that we should not feel frustrated, overwhelmed, or discouraged by frequent bad behavior, but should treat discipline as a moment to minister in grace, realizing that we too are sinners who need grace.

I would've liked more tactical instruction (if your child does X, you do Y), but Tripp says at the beginning it's not a tactical book. It's meant to reorient your view of, and approach to, parenting to be more biblical. In that way, it's similar to the Bible, which gives general parenting principles but few tactics.

## **Notes**

### **Introduction: Ambassadors**

"What is missing in most Christian parents' parenting are the big grand perspectives and principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Not a book of practical strategies and tactics; a reorienting book to give vision, motivation, strength, rest.

Be an ambassador to your kids, not an owner of them. Parenting is not primarily about what we do for our kids or want from them, but about what God plans to do through us in our kids.

Your work isn't to turn your children into anything. It's to be God's instrument in caring for them as he transforms them. It's not about achieving goals but being a usable and faithful tool.

## **Calling**

Connect everything you require of kids in behavior or belief to story of redemption. Go beyond enforcing your authority and point to his authority, and beyond that to his grace.

## **Grace**

God doesn't call people to be parents because they are able. God often calls unable people to do important things (Abraham, Moses, Gideon, David, disciples).

Recognize that you're a sinner in need of grace parenting a sinner in need of grace. You face the same struggles they do.

Your kids don't cause you to do and say negative things; your heart is the cause. Confess that and seek

transforming grace.

### **Law**

Don't expect rules to change child's heart and life; only grace can do that.

### **Identity**

Don't spend more time disciplining children for breaking God's law than you do telling them about Jesus, who perfectly kept law on their behalf.

### **Process**

"Parenting is not a series of dramatic confrontation-confession events, but rather a life-long process of incremental awareness and progressive change."

### **Lost**

You're not just dealing with child's behaviors, you're doing with their condition. That's why you must deal with same issues repeatedly.

Children need compassion, understanding, patience, acceptance, forgiveness, grace more than criticism, judgment, condemnation, punishment (although they need authority, rules, enforcement, accountability).

Don't settle for winning the battle over the behavior; fight for heart behind the behavior.

Move towards children with grace of forgiveness, wisdom, correction, rescue; don't give way to irritation, frustration, impatience, discouragement.

### **Foolishness**

When disciplining, talk to child about her heart. Ask questions, tell stories, give illustrations to get child to step out of herself, quit defending herself, and examine her heart. Holy Spirit can use these moments to impart self-knowledge, sense of wrong, responsibility, desire to change.

Discipline is more about grace than law, so don't threaten, manipulate, or guilt.

Don't be mad when you have to discipline. God is giving you an opportunity to be part of his rescue of them. Patiently enforce the rules, but also talk about how beautiful, protective, practical, helpful, good God's wisdom is.

### **Character**

Help children understand when their behavior is motivated by self-worship (idolatry) rather than God-worship. What rules the heart controls the behavior.

### **False Gods**

You must understand child at heart level and work to be instrument of heart change.

No one gives grace better and more willingly than a person who has admitted that he desperately needs it himself. Have a humble, grace-thankful heart in all you do with your kids.

### **Rest**

"The most important thing you do for your children is to remember the one who sent you, and ... teach your heart to rest." Meditate on God, not the struggle, to avoid feeling overwhelmed, defeated, guilty.

God exposes your weaknesses so you'll run to Him and grow in confidence of His presence, power, provision. 2 Cor 12:9.

Success is about faithfulness (do good towards children every day), not results.

### **Mercy**

God calls us to be 1st responders to our children. 1st responders don't lecture, judge, condemn, but provide, rescue, protect, help, heal. They don't take others' needs personally, and don't get mad at interruptions.

Help child see the heart behind their behavior. Ask what they were thinking, feeling, wanting, seeking to accomplish. This helps them grow in heart awareness.

You aren't called to change child's behavior or beliefs, only to expose what's bad, point to what's good, and talk about Jesus who can lead them from bad to good.

When child sins, treat it as a moment to minister in grace, not as a hassle or interruption.

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### **Laura says**

This is one of my favorite parenting books. I listened to it on audiobook. I plan to purchase a hard copy and reread it at some point. It was so helpful and encouraging.

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### **Jillian Vincent says**

Highly recommend to any parent. Will probably read once a year from here on out! Big takeaway: best tool for gospel parenting is understanding the gospel myself. Thankful for this reminder

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### **Claire Johnson says**

I can't recommend this book enough. This was my third time through. I believe it's currently the best parenting book out there.

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### **Casey Bradshaw says**

I think this one will live on my nightstand. It has such truth and encouragement. The last page sums it up well: "In every moment of parenting, the wise Heavenly Father is working on everybody in the room."

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### **Shane says**

As a parent of children between five and fourteen, I've read quite a few parenting books (Christian and non-

Christian). This one by Paul Tripp is similar to other Christian books I've read because it talks about patience, forgiveness, authority, character, and so forth. In fact, Tripp's book is very similar to one called "Give Them Grace." In my opinion, Tripp's book "Parenting" is somewhat helpful, and somewhat unhelpful. I'll break it down:

**HELPFUL:** Tripp nicely emphasized the need for God's grace in parenting. Parents need God's grace and so do their kids. Like his other work, Tripp wrote that we are God's instruments of grace in the lives of our children.

The book also recognized the reality of sin in our kids' hearts and their need for Christ. Many of Tripp's principles and tips for parenting were good, such as the fact that we need to see parenting as a long process, the fact that we are more like our kids than we often think, that we need to tell them about God very often, etc. There is a lot of wisdom in this book.

**UNHELPFUL:** Tripp's writing style made the book somewhat hard to read. He repeats himself quite often, asks tons of rhetorical questions, and uses more words than necessary. By the end of the book I was thinking he could have gotten his points across with 50 fewer pages.

The subtitle of this book is inaccurate. Tripp's "14 gospel principles" aren't really gospel (or "good news") principles, they are wise statements on parenting from a Christian perspective. Speaking of the principles, there are 14 overarching principles, but in each chapter there are minor principles as well. As I moved on in the book, I felt overwhelmed by all these principles (e.g. "you need to..." "your children need to..." "you must be..."). The book is supposed to be a "big gospel picture" (p. 13) of parenting, but the numerous principles went against a big picture perspective.

Tripp also says a Bible word that explains God's calling for parents is to be an "ambassador." However, this word is used twice in the NT to describe the apostolic ministerial calling (2 Cor. 5:20 & Eph. 6:20).

(As a side, Tripp doesn't really mention anything about kids with biological or mental issues, so this book is less helpful for parents facing these things in their kids.)

Finally, one unhelpful aspect of the book is the fact that Tripp says children of believers are "lost" sinners with hard hearts. It is true that children of believers are sinful, for sure, and need Jesus as much as their parents do. But Scripture's description of children in a Christian home is more positive than Tripp's. The Bible says they are "holy" ("set apart" - 1 Cor. 7), a blessing from God, and belong to God's covenant, like Abraham and his children. (Yes, I realize this is a Baptist vs. Reformed/covenantal view of children, and I'm Reformed). A major tone of the book is that our children are lost, and Tripp's advice to parents is affected by this tone. While some readers might agree with Tripp, I for one do not. Based on Scripture, I cannot call my children "lost."

In a word, there are some helpful parts to this book. It did remind me that I need to speak kind, loving, directing, forgiving words to my children, words that point them to Christ. But there were quite a few unhelpful parts in this book as well, so I can't recommend it wholeheartedly.

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## **Elise says**

One of the best parenting books I've read. To get the most out of it, I highly recommend reading it with your

spouse so you can discuss the concepts and remind yourself of the many solid truths in the book. I don't re-read very many books, but this is one I will return to.

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### **Sara Larson says**

Although repetitive in certain parts, this book is the gospel-centered Parenting pep-talk I need every day. He is honest, direct and encouraging. I'll definitely reread this!

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### **Samuel Parkison says**

I LOVE this book. It has been tremendously helpful. Tripp is a master at identifying and subtle heart sins and clearly directing them toward the gospel. His writing does feel bogged down at times with all of his stories and illustrations. "Sally acted this way with her son," "Billy never always threw a tantrum in the grocery store," "Jamie couldn't figure out how to get her daughter to spend less time on social media" and on and on and on. I felt free by the end to just skip large chunks to get to the meat of his chapters, which weren't hard to find because Tripp is a good communicator. That little stylistic beef notwithstanding, this book is gold. If you're reading this book as a parent, I'm going to go out on a limb and say you should probably start with chapter 13, and return to it as need be.

As an extra endorsement, I'll just say this book has already shaped my thinking and intentionality with my parenting, and I have been blown away by the how my 3 year old is beginning to grasp his sin. I praise God for this resource in my family's life.

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### **Robin says**

Classic Tripp on how the gospel should be what shapes and drives our parenting. Lots of helpful reminders that ultimately we parent out of being and knowing His parental love and authority toward us as Father.

The thing that irks me about Tripp's writing is that he is so repetitive (reminded me of the Dangerous Calling book). Maybe he was trying to drill the points home, but I felt it was unnecessary.

Besides that, I enjoyed it. The second to last chapter (Rest) spoke a lot to me that the Lord ultimately shoulders the weight of the responsibility that we often carry (and feel like we are collapsing under) as parents, so we can truly find rest.

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### **Nirupa Mathew says**

#### **Best Christian parenting book I've read**

I love his gospel centered perspective on parenting! Although a bit repetitive, content was spot on and I was deeply convicted. I will revisit this book again and again. Excellent read.

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## Stephen Escalera says

If I had to give a one-sentence review on Paul David Tripp's new book "Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family," it would simply be "Read it." I don't think I resort to hyperbole when I say that this book is perhaps the best parenting book that I've ever read (and I've read a few). In it, Tripp is encouraging without excusing, convicting without condemning and emboldening without blaming. He writes with the heart of a pastor seeking to help those in his care.

Throughout his book, Tripp constantly points the reader to the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross, encouraging parents to rest on the authority and power of God rather than their own to raise their children. He reminds parents that we are ambassadors of God to do gospel work in our families. In doing so, he focuses quite a bit on our responsibilities as parents first, but not in browbeating manner. "Successful parenting is not first about what you've produced; rather, it's first about what you have done. Let me say it this way: successful parenting is not about achieving goals (that you have no power to produce) but about being a usable and faithful tool in the hands of the One who alone is able to produce good things in your children." (p.19) All too often, I get caught up in taking my children's failures personally, but Tripp encourages me that I cannot take credit or blame for failures or successes in my children. I am simply to be used by God and let Him worry about the outcome. It is this theme that Tripp returns to many times throughout the book and it's a theme worth hearing repeatedly.

The principles that Tripp writes of help the reader to see their children and themselves through the lens of the finished word of Christ. Principles like our calling to teach our children (ch. 1): "You could argue that the chief reason God put parents in children's lives is so that they would know him." (p.30) Or the principle of grace (ch. 2): "God hasn't just sent you to do his work in the lives of your children; he will use the lives of your children to advance his work in you." (p.42) Among some of the things he talks about, he talks of how our children are a long-term work in process, that they are lost (and not just behaving badly), that they seem themselves as their own authority, that they are foolish ("Rather than being unkind, it is in fact biblical to look at your children and to understand that you are parenting fools" – p.130) and that it is a worship issue, whether they are worshipping themselves or God.

As I was reading the book, several times I had to stop and reread a sentence or two because I felt like someone had opened a window to a hot and stuffy room, allowing a cool, refreshing breeze to flow in. Many times, I was convicted of my lack of grace in my parenting but encouraged, not to try harder, but to rest in the power of God and in the knowledge that HE could handle the outcome. I need to be the willing tool.

I have two small complaints against this book. One is that Tripp often seems to get stuck in a writing pattern, repeatedly starting one sentence after another with the same thing. The second is that I do wish Tripp used a few examples of what his principles or conversations looked like in action. While he does include a few, a few times I found myself writing in the margins "What does this look like?"

This is a book that I know I'll be reading again. It is packed full of biblical wisdom and reminders that I need every minute of every day. The last quote I'll include is from the chapter on rest: "Parenting is hard; it will expose your weaknesses and it will challenge your faith....But the good news of the gospel is that you don't have to hide your struggle. You don't have to act as if you're doing better than you are....God will expose your weaknesses so that you will run to him, find his help in your time of need, and grow in your street-level confidence in his presence, power, and provision." (pp.191-192)



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### **Elizabeth says**

Aside from the Bible, this is probably one of the best and most edifying books that I have read this year. Like looking at a diamond from every angle, each chapter demonstrates how the Good News of what Jesus Christ accomplished through His life, death, and resurrection applies to parenting. This book is convicting, encouraging, and challenging. I highly commend it!

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### **Calvinist Batman says**

This is by far the best parenting book I've read. It's more general ideas and not exact practices, but it's hard to read a page and not feel convicted. It has changed my parenting completely and I plan on reading it once or twice a year for the next 20 years. It's that good.

Update from 2nd readthrough:  
Still amazing. 19 more years to go.

Update from the 3rd readthrough:  
It's still amazing and humbling. I need this book in my life. Since becoming Presbyterian, I found myself agreeing even more with Tripp and noticing things he says in a different light. 18 more years to go.

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### **Bethany says**

Hands-down one of the best parenting books I've read.

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