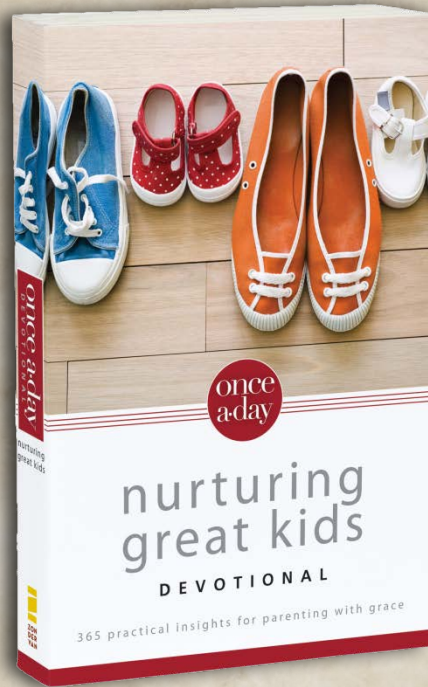




# **Be a Strong Christian Role Model By Parenting with Grace**



Raising children brings incredible joy and fulfillment, as well as frustration, uncertainty, and stress. Fortunately, God gives us guidance on how to be godly parents. This 21-day reading plan helps you bring God and His Word into your parenting. Devotions are selected from the Once-a-Day: Nurturing Great Kids Devotional by Zondervan.





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# Day 1: It's Up to the Lord

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Our children need to know that the Lord will do what he wants to do. He is almighty. He is sovereign. Proverbs 21:30 tells us that no plan of ours will succeed against God—even if we think we are right and he is wrong, even if we don't understand his motives. We don't always fully grasp this thought because we cannot reconcile the bad things that happen with our knowledge that God is good. We want to ask why. It's worth noting that after all of Job's trials and even with the lessons God taught him about life, God never told him why he was suffering. It's enough to say that God doesn't have to answer to us or explain anything.

As you accept this eternal principle, you must also teach it to your children. They will work to understand these concepts as they mature and grow, but you can assist them in the process by setting the example of complete submission to God. You will sometimes have to say, "I can't explain that." What you do know and can explain is that the will of God will always prevail. We can pray to him for understanding and guidance through all the "what ifs" and "whys" of life.

But in the end, his way is not our way. Accepting this truth will be to the benefit of your family.





# Day 1 Scripture

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## Proverbs 21:30

There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD.

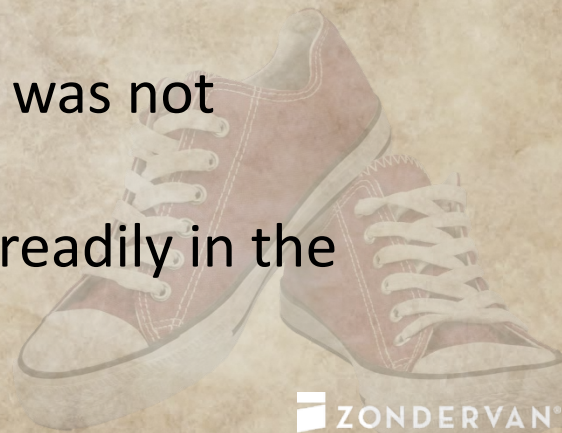
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Parenting Principle: God is God and I am not!

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## Points to Ponder:

- What examples of submission to God do your children see in your life?
- What plan have you created that you now see was not necessarily God's plan?
- How can you learn to accept God's plan more readily in the future and to teach your children this skill?





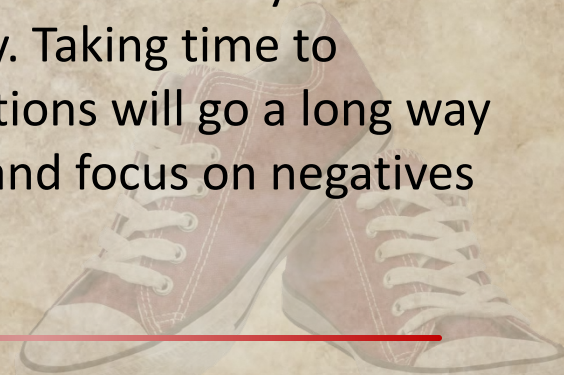
# Day 2: More Is Less

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It's so easy to point out the flaws in our children. They seem obvious, especially when they're little or they're teens. When they become adults, they still seem obvious. It's always been true that focusing on the negative is easier than the positive. If you don't believe me, just watch the evening news.

Our challenge as parents is to focus on the positives in our children and to give credit where it's due as we recognize those positives and realize it's in our power to act. Even if you have a child who is disobedient most of the time, point out, celebrate and reward those times when they do obey and their attitude is positive.

Every home needs a little bit of celebration. If your natural tendency is to focus on the negative, your children will react accordingly. Taking time to remind them that you will also key in on their positive actions will go a long way in unlocking tension in the relationship. Celebrate more and focus on negatives less.





# Day 2 Scripture

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## Proverbs 3:27

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act.

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Parenting Principle: Maintain a healthy balance between celebrating the positive and needing to point out the negative when it's helpful.

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### Points to Ponder:

- How do you acknowledge negative behavior without building animosity?
- How do you celebrate positive behavior?
- How could you do a better job of celebrating accomplishments?





# Day 3: Choosing Friends

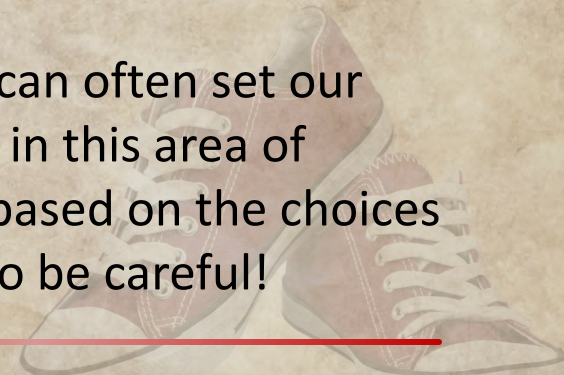
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Do you remember how you chose friends in high school? I'm guessing righteousness wasn't on your checklist or the first thing you considered. So be patient as you see your children begin to choose their friends. They will definitely become like the people they hang out with, so help them see the pitfalls of having friends who don't make wise choices.

However, don't beat yourself up if they make some poor decisions. It's part of the maturation process and a natural function of growing up. Our goal as parents is to expose our children to as many nuggets of truth as they can receive and accept. Then pray they will own these beliefs as they align their lives with God's Word and God's will.

The key words in that last sentence are "God's will." We can often set our agenda and goals for our children ahead of God's will even in this area of friendship. Be careful not to judge your children's choices based on the choices you made at their age. This is an easy pitfall for parents—so be careful!

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# Day 3 Scripture

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## Proverbs 12:26

The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.

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Parenting Principle: Choose good friends and your children will benefit from your example.

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### Points to Ponder:

- What have you learned about making good choices in friends?
- What type of choices in friends are your children making?
- What are some things you can do to continue to guide your children in this area?





# Day 4: Work it Out

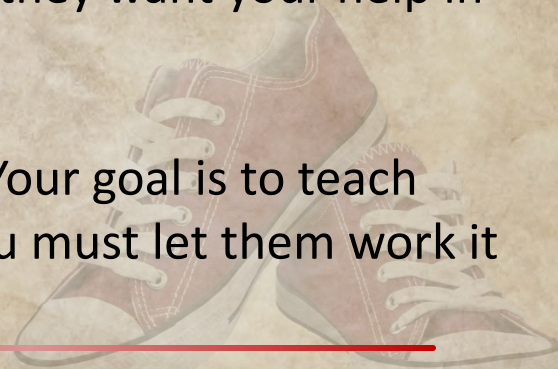
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If we take this verse literally and apply it to family life, we can see the importance of teaching our children to love each other and be understanding. We can mandate this behavior for the first few years, but there comes a point when they will have to make their own decision to be careful and not wrong each other. To be absolutely conflict-free would be almost unthinkable. But to expect your children to forgive each other and not allow disagreements to ruin their relationship is a fair ask.

When they are young, help them settle their disputes. As they age, give them the skills to handle them on their own. Help them understand each other's personalities—a biggie! Don't label your children with descriptive terms that put them in a box and make this reconciliation process difficult! If you see walls being built up against each other, be sure to help or ask if they want your help in leveling these walls.

Life will give siblings plenty of opportunity to disagree. Your goal is to teach them resolution skills, and then as they become adults you must let them work it out on their own.

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# Day 4 Scripture

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## Proverbs 18:19

A brother wronged is more unyielding than a fortified city; disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel.

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Parenting Principle: Help your children work it out and work yourself out of it.

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## Points to Ponder:

- How capable are you at resolving conflict between siblings?
- How did you learn the skills you have?
- Are there differences now that you need to resolve?





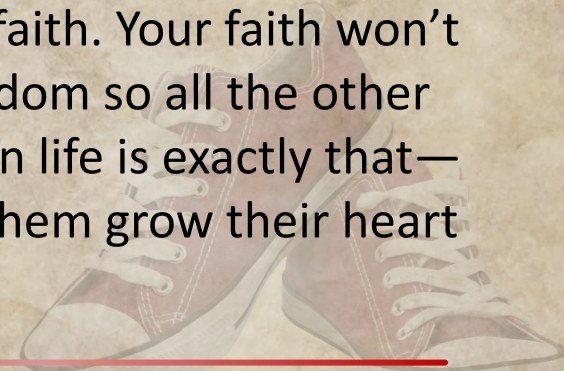
# Day 5: A Matter of the Heart

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There will be a stage in parenting when you will wonder what's going on with your child—good and bad. You may observe them doing something that is very caring and sensitive and you will be amazed wondering where it came from. Proverbs 27:19 tells you. It came from their heart. Those moments cause parents to smile in their souls.

It's also likely that a time will come when you can't believe your child's behavior. They will embarrass you and show no remorse. They will say and do things that you are sure you have told them to refrain from. You will wonder if everything you said went in one ear and out the other. This too is a reflection of their heart. What's inside will always come out.

This is why your children need to be strong in their own faith. Your faith won't transfer to them. Their heart needs to seek first God's kingdom so all the other things of life will fall into place, including their actions. Then life is exactly that—their life. It's our responsibility to do what we can to help them grow their heart toward God because one day they will be on their own.





# Day 5 Scripture

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## Proverbs 27:19

As water reflects the face, so one's life reflects the heart.

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Parenting Principle: You can make your child look good, but only God can help them be good

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### Points to Ponder:

- What does your own life reflect?
- What does your child's life reflect as an indication of what is in their heart?
- How can you pray for their heart?





# Day 6: Fear the Lord

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The idea of being untouched by trouble is appealing to a parent. However, Proverbs 19:23 doesn't say we won't have trouble, it says we will be untouched by it. In other words, trouble will not affect who we are in Christ.

When we hear the phrase “fear the Lord” we might retreat with almost a hand up for protection from his wrath. That's a misunderstanding of the concept. God should be feared out of respect for his encompassing power. Use this analogy: If I told you I fear lawn mowers, it would mean I don't stick my hand underneath one while it's running. But

I don't cringe every time I see a lawn mower. I just respect its power.

When we have a healthy fear of God and teach what that looks like to our children, we help them have a good life—a life that may include trials but that recognizes God's power even in the midst of those trials. Our children can rest content knowing God is God. Period!

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Continue to the next page for the rest of this devotional



# Day 6 Scripture

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## Proverbs 19:23

The fear of the LORD leads to life; then one rests content, untouched by trouble.

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Parenting Principle: Fear the Lord and rest content for that is God's intent.

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## Points to Ponder:

- How have you come through a time of trouble, yet are untouched by trouble in the long-term?
- Are your children learning to rest content? How?
- What is one way you can help your children develop a proper fear for the Lord?





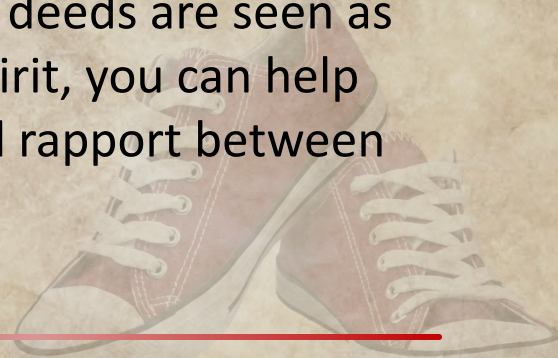
# Day 7: Drink It In

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Let's put this verse in the context of parenting. When you receive news that your child has been a blessing to others or that they have been a good student in class—it's like a refreshing drink. It lightens your spirit and encourages you to press on in this parenting journey. We certainly need that, as parents don't usually receive a lot of accolades.

As parents, we may become so consumed by our own need for a “cool drink” that we forget our children need it as well, regardless of their age. When we bless our children with words of encouragement or we find a quality in them worthy of celebration—we become like a fresh drink to their spirit.

It's easy to think that we do enough for them already. But that can't be our attitude. We must stay in the mind-set that our words and deeds are seen as kind and uplifting to them. If you continue to foster this spirit, you can help bring them peace in the tough times and help build a good rapport between you.





# Day 7 Scripture

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## Proverbs 25:13

Like a snow-cooled drink at harvest time is a trustworthy messenger to the one who sends him; he refreshes the spirit of his master.

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Parenting Principle: A fresh drink will quench your children's thirst and refresh their soul.

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### Points to Ponder:

- Who has been a refreshing drink for you?
- How could you be more refreshing to your family?
- How can you teach your children to be refreshing to others?





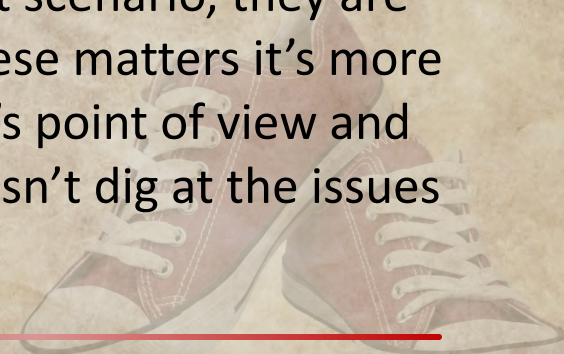
# Day 8: Not Too Deep

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At first glance, Proverbs 25:27 seems to say that shallow thinking is wise. But a closer look reveals a much more significant thought. The matters referred to are those things that, when sought out and uncovered, accomplish nothing.

The best way to illustrate this is to think about those times when you disagree on an issue with either your children or your spouse. Nobody is necessarily wrong but everybody is frustrated. When you spend all your time trying to get the other person to think your way, you are wasting everyone's time and causing division in the home.

Often one person will just want to be understood, which is good, but forcing another individual to think like them is destructive. In that scenario, they are delving too deep and it's not productive for anyone. In these matters it's more gracious to search deep enough to appreciate each other's point of view and then let it go! That is a depth everyone can share and doesn't dig at the issues that should be left alone.





# Day 8 Scripture

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## Proverbs 25:27

It is not good to eat too much honey, nor is it honorable to search out matters that are too deep.

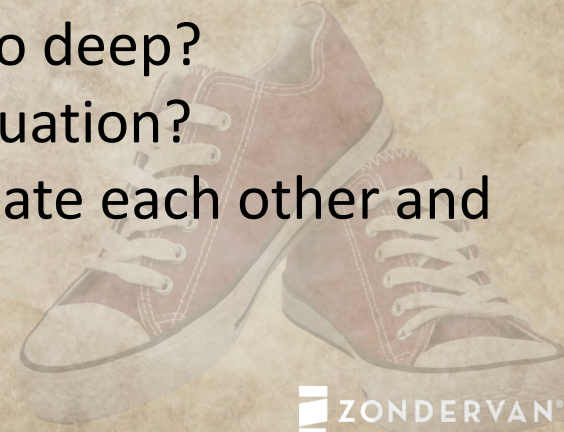
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Parenting Principle: Dig deep enough to hit water but don't keep digging and ruin the well.

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## Points to Ponder:

- What do you want to discuss too often and too deep?
- How could you back off a bit in a particular situation?
- How can you help your family see and appreciate each other and your differences?





# Day 9: Seek Advice

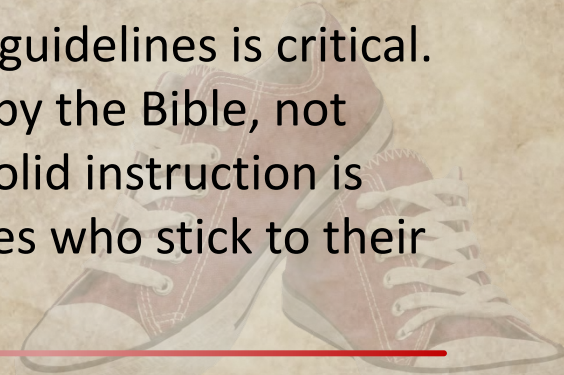
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We can't build a strong family by acting on our own! Going to God for advice and then seeking others to come alongside us as we follow that advice is a recipe for a good, healthy family.

Here is some advice for building a strong family: Establish some guidelines that everyone in the family can follow. You need to communicate these early on in your children's lives so they have a clear understanding of your expectations. This should help eliminate surprises or claims by your children that you are inconsistent or that rules are constantly changing. By setting these unswerving, basic rules from the very beginning, you have laid a foundation that can be built upon. Remind your children of this when they try to dodge compliance by asserting unfairness. That won't happen if you are reliable in your application.

Needless to say, the advice you seek for creating these guidelines is critical. Seek wise people and wise principles that are supported by the Bible, not opinions. It's not necessary to reinvent the wheel when solid instruction is already available. The most respected parents are the ones who stick to their standards when the going gets tough.

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# Day 9 Scripture

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## Proverbs 20:18

Plans are established by seeking advice; so if you wage war, obtain guidance.

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Parenting Principle: Plan today to prevent issues tomorrow!

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## Points to Ponder:

- How do you go about seeking advice?
- Who can help you establish a good family plan?
- How and when will you communicate this plan to your children?

