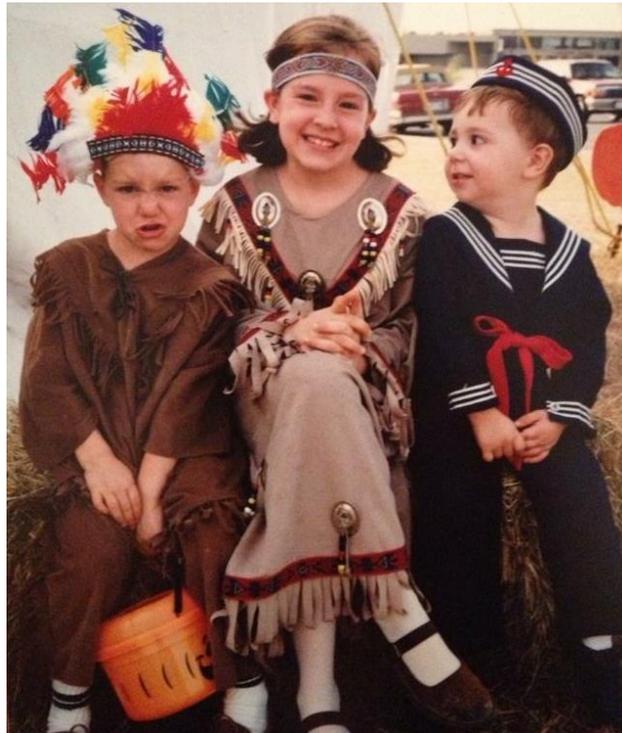


7 key questions your kids wish you had answered sooner



By
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The best time to plant a tree is ten years ago.
The second best time is today.

You can't go back and answer these seven key questions sooner,
but you can choose what your answers are today.

And by choosing what you plant in your family today,
you'll change what grows in their lives ten years from now.

Read the questions. Score your answers. Lead your family to a new future.

Question #1:

Am I a default parent OR a well-done parent?

How were you raised? Chances are, that's how you're parenting too, possibly unknowingly. Parenting by default is natural and comfortable. It's cloaked in gems like: "That's who I am" and "That's just how it's done." By default, we try to break our kids' bad habits, fix their behavior, and stop their drama – all good things, just short term.

Other parents, though, go further. They turn well-intended choices into well-done children. These "well-done parents" instill a legacy of hearing God's approval: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21). You can too if you'll bond with your kids' hearts, funnel their beliefs, and shape their dreams.

Well-done parenting isn't for the weak. It's daily, intentional, and often draining. It may even seem impossible at times. But in due season, it grows a harvest of 30, 60 or 100-fold.

Self assessment

For each of the five statements below, score yourself on a scale of 1-5: Are you more like the statement on the left or the statement on the right? (Then total your scores at the bottom.)

<u>Default parent</u>		<u>Well-done parent</u>	
			<u>Circle your scores</u>
Sorry, that's who I am That's what my mom/dad did Break kids' bad habits Fix kids' behaviors Stop kids' drama	 1 2 3 4 5	Sorry, I promise to do better That's what I choose Bond with kids' hearts Funnel kids' beliefs Shape kids' dreams	1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
			Total score: <input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

Question #2:

What's my goal for my kids?

Your legacy may not necessarily be the one you want, but it will be the one your kids want for themselves. Therefore, we need to inspire them to *want* a godly legacy. Here are three kinds of legacies based on the goals that Christian parents have for their kids.

Goal #1: Happy kids – “I just want my child to be happy.” Sounds so good. We all want happy kids. But good luck with that goal. When your happiness depends on their happiness, strap on for a rough, fickle ride.

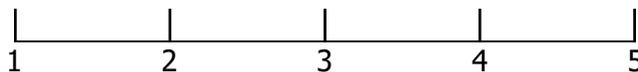
Goal #2: Godly adults – Some parents aim higher – for kids to become godly adults. Holy, not just happy. However, if kids don't know how to pass down their own faith, it dies with them. You can help them know how with goal #3.

Goal #3: Well-done parents – These parents will not only hear God say, “Well done,” but also prepare their kids to hear it too. You can't make your kids be faithful, but you can make it easier for them to know how to . . . and to want to.

What's your goal for your kids? It's not a decree to install upon them. It's a dream to instill in them. Then one day they can lead their own kids to want to do the same.

**Happy kids/
Godly adults**

**Well-done
parents**



Circle your scores

Want kids to experience happiness	Lead kids to pass down holiness	1 2 3 4 5
Pray for kids to be godly adults	Prepare kids to also be godly parents	1 2 3 4 5
Instruct kids for good living	Inspire kids for a godly legacy	1 2 3 4 5
Kids know I pursue my values	Kids want to pursue their own values	1 2 3 4 5
A decree you install upon kids	A dream you instill in kids	1 2 3 4 5

Total score:

Question #3:

Are my kids the source of my identity OR the expression of my identity?

It's easy to be confident when kids behave. But what happens when our little angels become preteens and teenagers? That's when our true identity becomes apparent. Parents, please don't take too much credit when kids do great, and don't take too much blame when they don't.

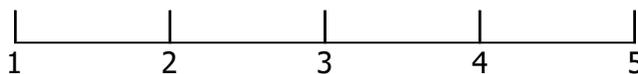
We don't have to be rollercoaster parents, subject to our kids' ups and downs. We can find calm amidst the stormy seas of parenting. We can rest by being dependent upon God, not upon the children He gave us to raise in His image.

Many great parents feel responsible for their prodigal kids' choices. But our faithfulness isn't determined by our kids' choices. We prepare them, but they choose. And by clinging to our identity in Christ, we empower kids to do the same when their actual path isn't their preferred path.

We don't just allow kids to have godly character. We model it, prepare them to embrace it, and routinely praise the godly character already within them. And one day, they'll likely see their own kids as the expression of identity, not the source.

**Source of
my identity**

**Expression of
my identity**



Circle your scores

Fret & blame when kids do poorly	Rest & pray, having prepared kids well	1 2 3 4 5
Ride the rollercoaster of parenting	Find joy despite kids' ups & downs	1 2 3 4 5
Devastated by prodigal's choices	Peaceful despite prodigal's choices	1 2 3 4 5
Dependent on kids' affirmation	Dependent on God's affirmation	1 2 3 4 5
Defined by kids' victories	Defined by Christ's victory	1 2 3 4 5

Total score:

Question #4:

Am I doing my best OR being a real leader?

Well-intended parents languish in “all I can do is my best.” They want to do better, but struggle with doing so. They may even lead well at work, but busy-ness and regret leave little in their tank to effectively lead where it matters most – at home.

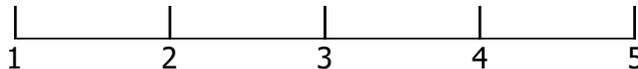
I knew I was leading poorly at home when my wife gave me the look and said, “The kids and I are NOT your employees!” Whoa, what a wake-up call! I had wandered away from “real leadership” – helping others want what they need to be faithful.

We can’t make kids want what we want, but we can help them want what they need. And when their perceived needs don’t keep them on the path to faithfulness, we can lovingly redirect them to true needs that do. We inspire and instruct to help them want it for themselves, while reminding them that well intended is not well done.

Are you leading your kids to want what they need to be faithful? Even if you do, they may not choose well. Exceptions happen. But real leaders prepare kids to be exceptional, not the exception.

**Doing
my best**

**Being a
real leader**



Circle your scores

All I can do is my best	I can always learn to do better	1 2 3 4 5
Tell kids what they want	Lead kids to want it for themselves	1 2 3 4 5
Assume what kids need	Discover/fulfill what kids need	1 2 3 4 5
Force kids to stay on a faithful path	Lovingly redirect kids who wander	1 2 3 4 5
Dream my kids will be like me	Dream my kids will be faithful	1 2 3 4 5

Total score:

Question #5:

Am I stuck in potty training, training wheels, training bras, or driver's training?

You can see it in their glazed eyes . . . young parents imagining a day without potty training. Even my amazingly empathetic wife lost it when our son yet again knowingly pooped his pants. She took him in the back yard and hosed him off, to which he hiked his little hiney toward her and proudly proclaimed, "You missed a spot!"

Maybe you're past potty training. But do you feel stuck in training wheels, training bras or driver's training? Each crisis is a life stage with unique drama and opportunities. Today's stage is just one hurdle with many more to follow. We learn to jump today's hurdle, knowing it comes with a familiar choice: overcome it or get tripped up by it.

The key isn't getting beyond crisis because another crisis awaits. The key is finding joy in it. It's taking today's next faith-filled step. It's turning daily drama into priceless teachable memories. Each little victory gives kids hope.

You too can learn how to see past today's crisis to and find tomorrow's champions, knowing tomorrow's champions are forged by today's choices.

**See today's
crisis**

**See tomorrow's
champion**



Circle your scores

Just get past crisis	Find peace amidst crisis	1 2 3 4 5
Glazed over by today's life stage	Find opportunities for tomorrow's stage	1 2 3 4 5
Survive constant daily drama	See teachable memories in daily drama	1 2 3 4 5
Dread today's problems	Today's choices forge tomorrow's champs	1 2 3 4 5
Trip over life's hurdles	Overcome a lifetime of hurdles	1 2 3 4 5

Total score:

Question #6:

Is my motto: give yours & earn mine OR give mine & earn yours?

Love and respect. Women especially want love; men, respect. But we all want both. Even the Bible says so. The question isn't which one I want – love OR respect. It's this:

- 1) Do I expect my kids to give me their love and respect, while expecting them to earn mine? ("Give yours & earn mine") OR
- 2) Do I freely give them my love and respect, while working hard to earn theirs? ("Give mine & earn yours")

Kids need the security of unconditional love and respect, regardless of their choices. They also want us to earn their love and respect, not demand it. If that seems one-sided, it is. But it's part of making integrity an integral part of your family legacy.

Love and respect become a free gift offered, not a privilege expected. But please don't confuse this with trust. Trust is earned by good choices over time. Still, even when trust is broken, you can love and respect the child, not their choice.

Give mine & earn yours . . . how could you make it a personal and family motto?

**Give yours &
earn mine**

**Give mine &
earn yours**



Circle your scores

Love/respect are privileges expected	Love/respect are free gifts offered	1 2 3 4 5
Demand love/respect	Give unconditional love/respect	1 2 3 4 5
Expect kids to give their love/respect	Work hard to earn kids' love/respect	1 2 3 4 5
Can't love/respect what I don't trust	Love/respect when I can't yet trust	1 2 3 4 5
Frustrated by kids' poor choices	Love/respect kids, not their choices	1 2 3 4 5

Total score:

Question #7:

Am I shaping a marginal family OR a family with margin?

I love to cram more into life. But more isn't always better. Less is often more, because more is wed to busy – a stealthy enemy of faithfulness. "Busy" robs joy by filling every nook and cranny of life. There's no room to breathe. No ability to expand or contract. No margin. But you can arrest busy with balance.

Without margin in our schedules and budgets, we aren't choosing to fail; we're failing to choose. And the results are the same – mediocrity. No one wants to hear, "Well done, *mediocre* servant." I'm not compelled to do mediocre work at a mediocre job, drive to a mediocre home, hug a mediocre spouse, play with mediocre kids, pray to a mediocre god, eat mediocre food, and one day have mediocre friends stand over a mediocre tombstone engraved, "Here lies Tim. He was mediocre."

Unless we build margin into our families, though, we get marginal families. Kids may say little now, but they're watching. And their default, years later, is to shape their own kids with the same intentional margin (or not) that they experienced as a child.

The good news is that parents with balance tend to raise well-balanced kids.

A marginal family

A family with margin



Circle your scores

Hope to simplify & focus	Intentionally build in margin	1 2 3 4 5
Allow busy to rob joy	Arrest busy with balance	1 2 3 4 5
Wish kids picked up my good habits	Instill my best habits in kids	1 2 3 4 5
Cram more into life	More isn't always better	1 2 3 4 5
Struggle finding balance	Raise well-balanced kids	1 2 3 4 5

Total score:

Maybe the most important question yet . . .

What will I do next?

Please note your total scores from the above 7 key questions:

Total Scores

Am I a default parent OR a well-done parent?

What's my goal for my kids? (Happy kids/Godly adults OR Well-done parents)

Are my kids the source of my identity OR the expression of my identity?

Am I doing my best OR being a real leader?

Am I stuck in potty training, training wheels, training bras, or driver's training?

Is my motto: give yours & earn mine OR give mine & earn yours?

Am I shaping a marginal family OR a family with margin?

Conclusions:

Which questions got your highest scores? What are two ways you can build on them today?

Which questions got your lowest scores? What are two ways you can improve them today?

You too can be a well-done parent who prepares your kids to become well-done parents. In my upcoming book, you'll learn how to instill vision, character, and culture in kids, which prepares them to know how to choose well . . . and to want to.

No matter what they choose, you've planted a seedling. You've done well, mom and dad!

About Tim



I was a simple man with a simple focus: faith and family. I was living my dreams as CFO/part-owner of an award-winning national restaurant chain. But then God began stirring in me a restlessness I couldn't explain. And as a 49-year-old, God called me to a new dream – to serve Him as my church's pastor of administration, communications, and missions. Out of board rooms and into prayer rooms.

My purpose and passion didn't change; just the outlet. My driving purpose is still to help my family and others want what they need to be faithful. And my driving passion is to hear God say, "Well done!" and help others do the same. I'm not pushing my purpose and passion on you; I want to help *you* lead *your family* to faithfully fulfill your own.

A story of my intentional family leadership was the fifth chapter (Letters to God: The Tim Alba Family) in a book by Crown Financial Ministries, *Stories of True Financial Freedom: God's Impact in Real Lives* (Bridge-Logos, 2006). I was also privileged to be featured in *Your Signature Life: Creating Excellence and Influencing Others* by Dianna Booher (Tyndale House, 2004). My greatest legacy, though, is the countless lives touched for eternity by my family and friends.

Learn more by subscribing to my blog at www.timalba.com. I promise to encourage and challenge you to be the Well-done mom or dad that your kids wish you would become.

And look for my upcoming book, *Well Done, Mom & Dad!: Turning Good Intentions into Godly Legacies*.