

**Well Done,
Mom & Dad!**

**A Practical Guide to Turn
Good Intentions into Godly Legacies**

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As we begin, please ask yourself two questions:

1) Will my kids say . . .

“Mom, I rise up and bless you. Dad also praises you, saying: ‘Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all.’ Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but as a woman who fears the Lord, Mom, you shall be praised. Well done, Mom” (Proverbs 31:28-30 – personalized).

“Dad, you’ve directed me in the way of wisdom and led me in upright paths. When I walk, my steps won’t be impeded; and if I run, I won’t stumble. I’ve grabbed your instruction and not let go. I guard her, Dad, for she is my life. Well done, Dad” (Proverbs 4:11-13 – personalized).

2) Will my Lord say . . .

“You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master. Well done, Mom and Dad” (Matthew 25:21– personalized).

Even if your kids don’t yet praise your faithfulness, you can rest in this promise: God will. And if God says, “Well done, Mom” or “Well done, Dad,” your kids will likely say it too one day.

A Reason for Real Hope

All Christian parents want happy, godly kids, but how do you turn those good intentions into a godly legacy? You may instruct kids well. You may even be a role model who lives it well. Still, do you ever struggle, wishing you knew the secret to making it happen?

That certainly was me as a young parent. I wanted to be a great dad. I even had a remarkable wife and parents. Still I struggled. Although my three kids – Leslie, Josh, and Caleb – were a blessing, they also had a challenging side, especially my baby girl, Leslie.

Like many kids, especially daughters, Leslie could wrap daddy around her little finger. Toddler Leslie would shout, “Daddy looves Leslie! That’s RIGHT!” Like no one else, she could melt my heart with a laugh, a song, or a hug. But Leslie had another knack. She could push my buttons. And heed my suggestions? Forget about it! Despite a deep relationship, Leslie and I clashed over attitudes, messy rooms, curfews, and, of course, boys.

I’ll never forget the day fourteen-year-old Leslie invited a boy to our home. Let’s call him Billy to protect the guilty. Like a good dad, I graciously issued no death threats to Billy. My shotgun, although loaded, sat anxiously unused. Rules were set. Principles clarified. And Billy arrived.

Did I sit between Leslie and Billy as they watched TV in the den? No. I stayed out of sight and made random trips to the fridge, which just happened to be next to the den. On my first two trips to the fridge, no problem. But on my third trip, I saw it . . . Leslie and Billy lip locked! Are you kidding me? It was all I could do to wait until the next day to lower the boom.

Leslie sauntered into the kitchen, avoiding eye contact, and grabbed the milk and a cup from the cupboard. Even the back of her head looked guilty.

I wasted no time. “Leslie Marie, what in the world were you thinking last night?!”

“What?” Her voice sounded like she was asking about the weather.

“No, Les. Don’t even think about playing dumb. You know exactly what I’m talking about.”

“Whaaaaaat?” She sat her drink down and gave me the look . . . the one where you know you’re busted, but think you can fake your way out of it.

“Come on, Les. I saw you kissing Billy last night.”

“Dad! You were spying on me?!” Big sigh, followed by an eye roll.

“Of course, I was checking on you. You’re fourteen and I don’t know this boy.”

“But, Dad, it was nothing.”

“Oh no, Les. I know what nothing looks like. And that was certainly not nothing. I know what boys that age have on their minds. I’m not saying Billy’s a bad kid or that you crossed some terrible line. You know what I’m sayin’. You have to be more careful, Les. You can’t trust boys.”

Another, even bigger, eye roll. “Oh, Dad! You don’t know boys!!!”

What does a dad – a grown boy – say to that? I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. I did wonder, though, how I’d failed as a parent. How many times could I tell her? How many ways? What would it take to sink in?

Back and forth we went, Leslie explaining why she was right (you know, the wisdom forged from fourteen years of learning all there is to know), and me guiding her back to reality. Today, it was smooching Billy. Tomorrow, it would be something else.

Leslie wasn't a bad kid. In fact, she was a great kid, except when we disagreed. And we disagreed often.

Ever been there? Surely you have, even though your specifics will vary, because of one reason: you're a parent. It comes with the territory. If you're not there now, strap on. It's coming. So what do you do when you can't see past today? When you're exhausted? When you're rebuffed because you can't possibly know anything? How could you, you're just a parent?!

While my wife, Anna, and I had many parenting challenges, we're here to tell you there's hope. No, there's no magic formula. But God does work. And kids can respond over time if you know the "secret" to helping kids be faithful. It's not telling them what to do or how to feel. You can't convince or force kids to be faithful. Instead, the secret is helping kids *want* to be faithful.

In this book, you'll read real-life stories, complete exercises, and create practical applications for one reason – to help your kids know how to be faithful . . . and want to. You'll learn how to lead through, not react to, parenting challenges. You'll find a reason for hope. Real hope. For in those times when you wonder if you've failed as a parent, you too can look forward to the day you get a priceless note, like this text from Leslie who had grown to be a godly woman:

Dad, I just want to say how thankful I am for the grace you gave me. I know I never did things the easy or smartest way. You saw it and could have made me do better. I know I didn't listen a lot of the time and didn't honor your advice. But thank you for giving me so much grace, for loving and not shaming me when I came back to you, having failed, and asked for your help after the fact. I'm sure it was hard and frustrating to watch. But I see it now. I know now how well you loved me through the process. I'm thankful now to have experienced your good discipline as well as forgiveness and trust. I know I haven't always been the wisest, but I'm really grateful that you loved me anyway. Thanks, Dad!

Those are the nuggets of hope that struggling parents long for and wonder if they'll ever happen. But they *can* happen, even decades later, as you'll see in Chapters 6 and 12. You may be a young parent and think it's too early. You may have teenagers and think it's too late. Or you may be a grandparent trying to step in without overstepping. No matter your stage, the good news is that it's never too early or too late to prepare kids and grandkids to feel God's warm embrace.

Many exhausted parents think they'll do better when they get past a stage. But life only gets busier and harder. They say, "If only I could get through potty training." But just past potty training are training wheels. And after training wheels come training bras. And after training bras, it's drivers training. Today's drama becomes tomorrow's trauma unless you turn good intentions into a godly legacy. Thankfully, the solution isn't a secret. It's not complicated. It's a process – a dream and a plan called "well-done parenting" that any parent can apply over time to help their kids want to be faithful.

Well-done parenting not only prepares you to hear God say, "Well done." It also prepares kids to become godly parents. With vision, character, and culture, you can see eternal possibilities, not just today's problems. Let's begin exploring well-done parenting by imagining a scenario:

It's the dead of night and you're jolted awake with an uncontrollable cough. Screams pierce the stench and roar of raging fire as you run through suffocating smoke to a window. It's your family, safely outside, pleading for you to get out. Throwing open the bedroom door, you see there's time to grab only one thing before escaping. What do you grab?

Know this, what you'll grab is what you treasure. You won't weigh options or try to impress. Even if you don't know why, you'll grab what matters most at that moment. My wife said she'd grab her photo albums, but what would you grab?

In fact, we face this question daily. In the heat of the moment, we often don't grab the compelling treasures we wish we would. Instead, we grab convenient treasures – default choices that would never make a short list of priorities. How about you? Are you grabbing the faith and family you want to treasure, or are default choices grabbing you? For if you don't choose in advance, you easily forget why. And if you forget why, what kind of life (and perhaps eternity) waits for your family? But you don't have to wait for a tragedy to choose.

The tragedy is to not choose and live with the consequences. Then again, failing to choose is choosing to fail. How might your family be living with the consequences of your default choices? What do they need from you to turn those default choices into compelling treasures? Chances are, your family, like mine, needs a guide – simple tools to inspire and instruct, along with practical ways to understand why we sometimes fall short. Knowing how starts with knowing yourself.

Two kinds of Christian parents

Parents need to look beyond today's challenges to see tomorrow's champions. For indeed Leslie did eventually learn to not trust boys. It just took time and patience. And while Leslie had to make some tough choices, so did I. I had to learn about two kinds of Christian parents and decide which one I would be. How about you? Are you more like Parent A or Parent B?

<u>Parent A</u>	<u>Parent B</u>
Breaks habits	Bonds hearts
Fixes behavior	Funnels beliefs
Stops drama	Shapes dreams

Most parents are like Parent A, trying hard to break little Suzie's bad habits, fix her behavior, and stop her drama. They're not bad parents. They're good parents with good intentions, who

want simple solutions and quick fixes to break, fix, and stop today's problems. That's **default parenting** – the well-intended choices that get you through another hectic day. But well intended is not well done. We've all been there, but we don't have to stay there. We can become more like Parent B.

Parent B sees little Suzie differently – as the godly adult she can become. These parents also break Suzie's habits, but they do so by bonding with her heart. They fix her behavior by funneling her beliefs. And they stop her drama by shaping her dreams. They don't make Suzie's choices; they make it easy for her to choose well. That's **well-done parenting** – turning well-intended choices into children who hear God say, "Well done!"

Default parents allow default kids to happen. Well-done parents, though, bond with kids in ways they can hardly resist.

In *Families and Faith: How Religion is Passed Down across Generations*, Vern Bengtson researches why some families pass down their faith, while others don't. His conclusion after tracking 350 families for four decades: faith legacies continue most when children bond emotionally with their parents, especially their fathers. Despite vast societal changes, these "bonded" kids are more likely to continue their families' faith than leave it.

Armed with that hope, this book prepares families for a heavenly reunion. You'll learn practical *ways* of bonding with personal *whys*. Your dreams – perhaps God's dreams – can live on through your kids by embracing the three bonds of well-done parenting.

Bond #1: Vision

The first bond of well-done parenting is compelling vision that sees how to turn what *is* into what *can be*. In Chapters 1 to 5, you'll choose your treasures using 50-20-5-1 Embrace – a simple exercise that prepares your family for heavenly embraces by embracing your compelling treasures.

50-20-5-1 Embrace



You’ll choose fifty pursuits that matter, which you’ll narrow to twenty priorities that matter most, then five passions you’ll live for, and finally one purpose you won’t live without. Families, co-workers, and friends have all used this tool to discover compelling vision. A mom said, “This is important enough that I want my family to know their treasures and learn this as children.” A friend said, “It’s a roadmap to my future. It changed how I spent last weekend with my grandkids. We did things together that really matter to me. And that changes everything.”

After shaping a family vision, Chapter 6 provides practical tips to make it come alive. You’ll learn six ways to visualize a family vision that inspires your kids to do the same one day.

Bond #2: Character

The second bond of well-done parenting is timeless character – living your chosen qualities with integrity. In Chapters 7 to 11, the 1-2-3-U Discovery assessment helps you lead yourself well in

order to lead your family well. It's a progression of character that puts your family on the path to faithfulness.

1-2-3-U Discovery



While books abound on topics like success, significance, and legacies, this book reveals their interdependence . . . how fulfilling treasures birth success, success becomes significance, and significance grows into faithful legacies. Like this pyramid, though, life plateaus unless others, not you (U), are on top.

Faithful family legacies are forged in character that connects kids with parents. Thus, Chapter 12 shows you how to meld a secret sauce of character qualities that kids want for themselves.

Bond #3: Culture

The third bond crafts a captivating family culture that multiplies your values through an inspiring environment of faithfulness. You'll learn how to prepare kids to be purposefully courageous and passionately contagious. In Chapter 13, you'll learn how to make unique family promises. Chapter 14 reveals how to create memory tattoos that kids can't forget and wouldn't want to. And Chapter 15 prepares them for two kinds of heavenly hugs.

Vision invigorates. Character validates. Culture demonstrates. Vision opens kids' imaginations to see who God created them to be. Character makes vision believable and attainable. Culture adds authenticity so that kids want a godly legacy too.

Although Anna and I planned and tried hard, we missed the mark for years. We made plans to get married, find jobs, and buy a house. We even made plans for having kids. But we had no plan for parenting, and that had to change. This book shows you how with a dream and a plan.

Bill Yancey says: "A dream without a plan is just hope. And hope is not a strategy." I pray that you too will find a reason for real hope with your own compelling dream and practical plan. And not just any ol' dream . . . God's dream for your family:

Make it *your* mission
to make it *their* mission
to hear God say, "Well done!"

Whatever your dream may be, I'll help you articulate it, live it, and engage your family in it. Then your kids can be eager and able to do the same for their own families one day. For what could be greater than having your kids run to you in heaven, squeeze you close, and say, "Well done, Mom and Dad"? That's the moment your dreams have come true. You've done your job. You've put faithfulness on a tee so your kids can whack it. You haven't tried to make them faithful. You've made it easy for them to know how . . . and *want* to.

You're more than well intended.

You've done well!