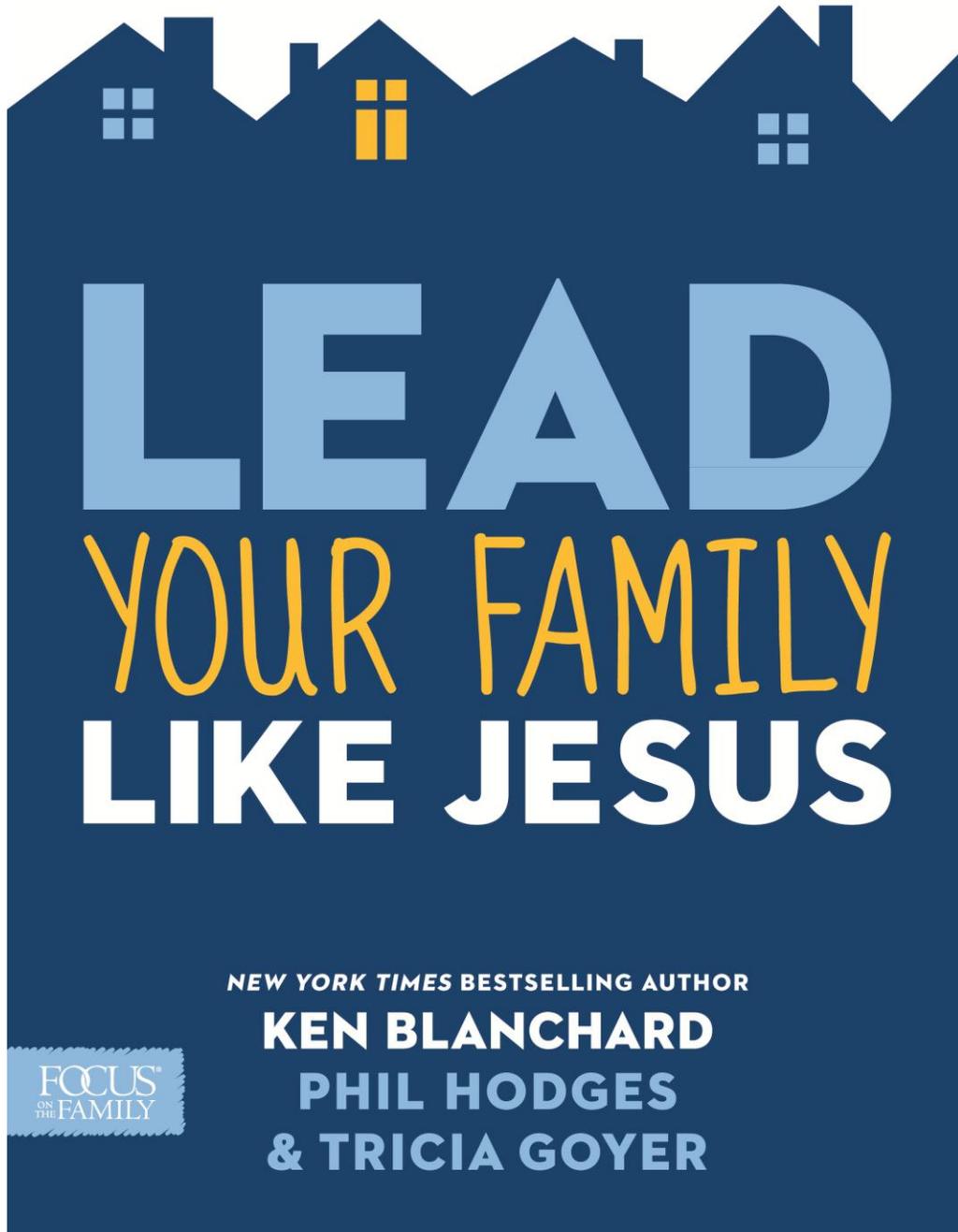


**POWERFUL PARENTING PRINCIPLES
FROM THE CREATOR OF FAMILIES**



An excerpt from "Lead Your Family Like Jesus"
For more information about the book, visit
www.LeadYourFamilyLikeJesus.com

Five Parenting Habits to Keep You on Track

In these principles drawn from the new book Lead Your Family Like Jesus, legendary leadership expert Ken Blanchard explores five powerful habits that can help you stick with leading your family as Jesus would.

When announcing emergency procedures before an airplane takes off, the flight attendant always instructs parents to put on their oxygen masks before giving oxygen to their children. Why? Because unless the parent is breathing, the kids won't have a good chance of breathing, either.

In the same way, it's important for family leaders to "breathe in" God's love and wisdom first—so that they can transmit His blessings to their kids.

Every morning when we wake up, we're tempted to focus our energy on self-serving interests instead. To be parents who lead like Jesus, we need to resist this temptation and renew our daily commitment to stay on track and serve rather than be served.

As Jesus moved through His season of earthly leadership, He was often tempted to go off course. He was continually pressured to respond to the failings of His friends and enemies. Yet He stayed on track with His mission by practicing the following five key habits that countered the negative forces arrayed against Him.

The First Habit: Solitude

In our Lead Like Jesus Encounter workshops, we ask participants to take forty-five minutes of solitude—a time when they don't talk to anyone, use their computers or cell phones, or have any other distractions.

Before we send people off for their period of solitude, we have them recite Psalm 46:10 with us in this way:

***Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know.
Be still.
Be.***

When people return from their solitude, they have big smiles on their faces. While many of them find it difficult to quiet their minds, they say it was a powerful experience.

The reality is that most of us spend little, if any, time in solitude. Yet if we don't, how can God have a chance to talk with us?

When we don't take time for solitude, we jump right away into our task-oriented selves and fill our time with trivial tasks that fail to enrich our spirits.

"While it was still night, way before dawn, he got up and went out to a secluded spot and prayed" (Mark 1:35, MSG). These words stand between Jesus and the temptation to spend His precious time doing the good and popular thing instead of doing the primary work for which He had come.

What allowed Jesus to resist doing *good* work and pick the *best*? In solitude and prayer, away from the hopes and hurts of those who looked to Him with high and compelling expectations, Jesus again received instructions on the best use of the next day from the Father.

The Second Habit: Prayer

As Jesus demonstrated, prayer and solitude often go together. Prayer isn't just a wish list; it's a way to quiet yourself and commune with the Lord.

Prayer is really a way to find out what His will is for you—in parenting and every other area. Here's what a mom named Allison told us:

"My prayer life is about constant communication with Jesus. I don't have a prayer closet, but I pray in the car, at my desk, while I'm cleaning or doing laundry, or wherever He brings something to my heart. I talk to Him, and then listen to what He wants to tell my heart. What I hear is weighed by Scripture, and then acted upon if necessary."

Another mom, Michelle added this:

"Prayer life is a personal thing. I used to think that my prayer life was horrible. After all, I am a busy working mom of five. I simply didn't have time to sit down and have a quiet time with God. The only time my house is quiet is the middle of the night and on the rare occasion that I get to sit and be still, I usually end up falling asleep. But I realized that I am speaking with God throughout my day. Scripture tells us to pray continually. While I don't have a quiet time, I do spend my day with God in many ways."

The Third Habit: Studying and Applying Scripture

Margie and I have fun supporting each other in our study of the Bible. Every morning we read a devotional my mother started giving me when I was ten years old. I participate in a men's Bible study group on the phone; Margie talks once a week with the wives of those men. As couples, we meet at least once a year with our Bible teacher. Margie keeps affirmations and Bible quotes on her night table.

Every day I read or recite some of my favorite Bible quotes. For example, we have a psalm taped on the mirror in our bathroom. It helps us start the day off with a positive attitude.

***This is the day the LORD has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
(Psalm 118:24)***

The Fourth Habit: Accepting God's Unconditional Love

Jesus stayed close to His Father by constantly trusting His Father's love, even to the end. It's hard to accept God's love when you don't have a good model of what unconditional love looks like. Not all of us have had a positive relationship with our earthly fathers and mothers to bring into our own parenting.

In our Leadership Encounter workshops we have an exercise in which we ask people to think of something they wish their parents or other important adults had said to them when they were young—something that would have made them feel better about themselves. It could be as simple as "I love you." Half the

group sits in a circle and half the group stands behind those who are seated. When we say “go,” the people standing lean down and whisper to those sitting in front of them the supportive words they wish they’d heard as children. Then they move to the person to their right and whisper the same words to him or her. They continue doing this until they’ve completed going around the circle, so that every participant gets to share his or her love statement a number of times.

Then people reverse roles, so that those standing now sit and hear a variety of love statements. Encounter attendees tell us this is one of the most healing exercises they’ve ever participated in.

Unfortunately, I see a lot of parents whose love—because they’re mere mortals—is conditional. When their kids make a mistake, the parents seem to repossess their acceptance and affection. Margie and I always tried to separate our love from our kids’ behavior; they always had our love. We might not like their behavior, but love wasn’t something they had to earn. It was a given.

The Fifth Habit: Involvement in Supportive Relationships

Staying close to God is tougher when you try to live the Christian life alone. That’s why the fifth habit is vitally important to you—and your family.

An accountability group can provide the support you need. Who in your life is willing to pat you on the back when you’re “on your game” and be honest with you when you’re off track? Candid feedback can be invaluable to your spiritual growth. Jesus had a small, intimate group—John, James, and Peter—with whom He could be vulnerable.

One of the values Margie and I have passed on to our kids is the importance of sustaining supportive relationships over a long period of time. Old friends have a lot of deposits in your interpersonal bank. They usually tell you the truth because they can draw from that account.

It’s wise to schedule supportive relationships into your calendar. I’m in a men’s support group and Margie is in one for women. We’ve been in these groups for a number of years, getting together every four to six weeks to help each other lead the kind of lives we want to lead.

Families often need accountability, too. Our company, for instance, is run by Margie and me, Margie’s brother Tom, and Scott and Debbie. When our kids and Tom decided they wanted to join our company almost twenty years ago, we formed a family council and hired an outside consultant to work with us. For the better part of fifteen years, that consultant has met with us one day every quarter so that conflicts don’t fester. Everybody gets a chance to share what’s happening and resolve any issues.

You may not be able to hire a consultant, but a pastor or counselor might help. Your family is too important to let resentments go unhealed. Spending face-to-face time with your accountability group and other supportive people in your life can keep you and your family on track—and closer to God.

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