



EDUCATION BY DESIGN

A Study Guide for Our Family's Journey
in John 15 Academy



JANET NEWBERRY

John15Academy.com



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Welcome to John 15 Academy!

Thank you for joining us on this transformational journey! Your John 15 Academy membership is a lifetime membership because there is a lifetime of special memories to be made with your children—and more than a few miracles to anticipate together. “There is great hope” isn’t just something we say, it’s something we believe. So, let’s get started!

How to Use This Study Guide:

This study guide is a resource to help you navigate through this lifelong journey we are taking together. To help find your way through the videos, worksheets, and downloads inside the John 15 membership site, this guide will queue you when to watch a video, when to read a selected text, or when to download and fill out a supplemental handout. We recommend you print this study guide at the beginning of your journey and keep it in a folder or binder where you can also add your own notes or the other downloads you will find as your journey progresses.

To help you navigate your journey, look for these icons throughout this study guide and the John 15 Academy website:



This icon indicates there's a video for you to watch. The video may be on the John 15 Academy site, or it may link to a Facebook Live or YouTube video.



This icon indicates there's a suggested reading inside this stage. You will find the excerpt or passage to read inside this study guide.



Look inside the John 15 Academy site for a downloadable worksheet or handout that coordinates with the stage topic. These downloads will be easy to print and are the same size as this guide, so you can store everything together.

Resource Library:

Every stage is a little different. Some have one video, some have more. Some stages have suggested readings or e-books, while others have downloadable resources. To make sure you aren't missing anything, here's a list of each of the resources for each stage.

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Video and Considerations and Questions worksheet• Information on Janet's book Education by Design, Not Default
Stage One:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Video and Considerations and Questions worksheet• Transformational Triangles download
Stage Two:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Video and Considerations and Questions worksheet
Stage Three:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Video and Considerations and Questions worksheet• Work, Struggle, Leisure, Play Chart
Stage Four:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Video and Considerations and Questions worksheet• This is Us in the Morning—downloadable resource with video instructions• A "fireside chat" video with Janet about creating a schedule by design• Sample Schedules—several options for you to download!
Stage Five:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Video and Considerations and Questions worksheet• Worthy Work download• A list of curriculum recommendations for every age
Stage Six:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Video and Considerations and Questions worksheet• Four E-books: All Things NATURE STUDY, All Things READING, Become a Writer, and The New Covenant
Stage Seven:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Video and Considerations and Questions worksheet• Report of Growth download
Stage Eight:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Video• E-book: Loving Your Child Well
Stage Nine:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Considerations and Questions worksheets• Connect and Reconnect Signature Course<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ 8 module videos, one at the beginning and end of each module◦ Connect and Reconnect Chart◦ Sharing Stories at the Table PDF◦ Once Upon a Time with God e-book
Stage Ten:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Considerations and Questions worksheet• Loving Your Child on the Road to Maturity Signature Course<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ 8 module videos, one at the beginning and end of each module◦ New Life Cycle PDF◦ Trusting Love to Meet My Needs PDF◦ Love is the Process of Meeting Needs PDF◦ A Life of Inspiration Resource◦ Life of Integrity e-book
Conclusion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Closing Video



Introduction

Are you ready to begin this great adventure? In this introduction, I will tell you more about my life experience that led me to create this academy, and you'll get a quick overview of the eight steps that you can take to help your child struggle well.

Before you begin, consider purchasing a copy of my book [Education by Design, not Default](#). There's a link to it in the Introduction stage of the Academy website.



Also in this Introduction stage of the website is a [Pacing Guide PDF](#). Download and consider the information in this guide before you begin anything else in the Academy. It will help you decide what pace you should take as you work through each of the ten stages.



Download: Considerations & Questions worksheet

Before you watch the video, print out a copy of the Considerations & Questions note-taking page. While you're watching, pause the video to write down the ideas that strike you in the column for "Considerations," and write your "Questions," too, in the space provided. When the video is over, take 10–15 minutes to quietly reflect on the content of the video, and make some more notes for yourself. This kind of note-taking is a powerful tool for mindful reflection. Linger in the new ideas. There is great hope!



Begin by watching the introduction video

Here are a few key points from the video:

- Cortisol is the fear hormone. Oxytocin is the love hormone. We want to create environments where oxytocin flows freely.

- The traditional path of education offers achievement, but many times comes with an increase in anxiety and stress.
- The transformational path of education offers relationships of trust, where childhood isn't a measurement of achievement.
- The eight steps of the "redeeming childhood" dance are:
 - Step 1: Build relationships of trust
 - Step 2: Connect in these trusting relationships
 - Step 3: Have real conversations about big ideas
 - Step 4: Call struggle what it is—real struggle
 - Step 5: Write down the lies
 - Step 6: Write down the truth
 - Step 7: Struggle well in truth
 - Step 8: Celebrate real healing and real growth
- Our dream: we imagine a world where children wake up inspired to go to school, feel connected in safe relationships, and go to bed fulfilled at the end of the day. We want homes to be places of connection, inspiration, and integrity so together we can build schools that put relationships first.
- Childhood is not a season of measuring up—it's a season of growing up!



STAGE ONE

Trading Transactional Relationships for Transformational Relationships—And Redefining Success

This stage focuses on the primary difference between traditional education and transformational education—the kind we’re all learning together to offer to our children.



[**Download: Considerations & Questions worksheet**](#)

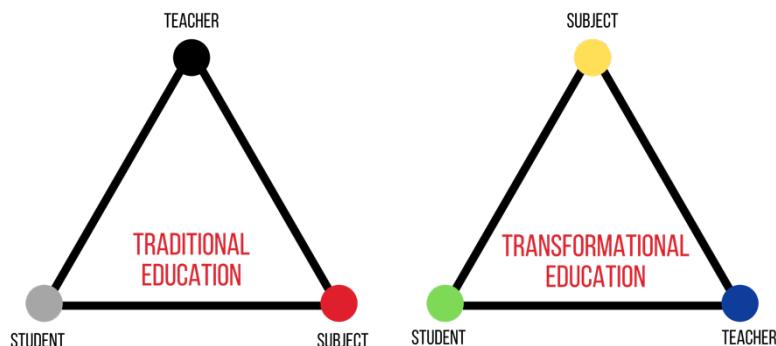


[**Watch the Stage One Video**](#)

As you watch the video, take notes and reflect on the video content using the Considerations and Questions worksheet.

Here are a few key points from the video:

- The John 15 Academy definition of success is this: Staying connected in relationships of trust and navigating work, struggle, leisure, and fun in truth, not lies—in love, not shame.
- Success is true—even when struggle is real.
- Success is dependent on relationships—not perfect performance.
- Success is NOT simply measurable achievement.
- Behavior is the echo of belief.
- Traditional education vs. Transformation education



- There is no good place for struggle in the traditional triangle. When struggle is a part of the story, the child is often left to navigate the struggle on their own. The child is left vulnerable to lies and shame.
- When struggle is a part of the story in the transformational triangle, the child has someone to trust—to help them navigate the struggle in truth—not lies—and without shame.
- The evidence of the child's trust is the child's response.
- Compare the two triangles:

Traditional Education Triangle	Transformational Education Triangle
Offers a life of pleasing and compliance	Offers a Life of trusting and responsibility
Is a picture of demand	Is a picture of supply
Is a picture of religion	Is a picture of grace
Offers a life of comparison	Offers a life of relationship and purpose
Offers a life of performance and bondage	Offers a life of worthy work and freedom
Where childhood is about measuring up	Where childhood is about growing up

- Trust is something we can build—but we can't demand.



Download: Transformational Triangles

The downloadable resource for this stage in our journey is a page that reminds us about the new definition of success—and also offers several transformational triangles—for you to record all the ways you're building a relationship of trust with your child. In each of the bottom left corners, write your child's name. Write your name in the bottom right corner. At the top, write a fun and different way to connect and enjoy each other's company through experiences where it is safe to trust each other.



STAGE TWO

Discovering Struggle is a Gift

This stage focuses on the power of oxytocin (the love hormone) and how love helps our children grow up when they connect with us in trust, not fear, especially when they struggle.



Download: Considerations & Questions worksheet



Watch the Stage Two Video

As you watch the video, take notes and reflect on the video content using the Considerations and Questions worksheet.

Here are a few key points from the video:

- In a performance-obsessed culture, there is no good place for struggle. When I struggle to perform, I struggle to earn.
- In a relationship-first culture, it is safe to be confused. It is safe to struggle—so it is safe to learn.
- Our goal is not simply for students to learn to compensate when they struggle. Our goal— whenever possible—is for students to resolve their struggles, and live life without their disabilities.
- When we have a rush of fear, we often don't take a deep breath and sort the lies from the truth. We react, instead of respond.
- Behavior is the echo of belief. If a child thinks, "I can't"—they're right. The brain doesn't know the truth from a lie; it simply builds pathways based on the thoughts we think. When the brain responds in fear, cortisol (the fear hormone) shuts down

anything associated with growing and learning. If a child thinks, “I can”—they’re right. The brain builds new pathways every time the child receives the help they need to do something new. This is learning!

- Our peace—and our patience—will remind our child that learning is still possible, even if it is difficult. Peace and patience are the fruit of the Spirit. Nothing is impossible with God.
- “Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”—Romans 12:2
- God designed maturity to happen in families, because home is where we are created to find safety when we struggle.
- Achievement alone won’t solve the problem of prolonged immaturity. Love is the fuel of maturity.
- Struggle invites us to grow up. Love invites us to change our minds—to agree with truth. Love restores order to chaos.
- The best gift we can give our children is a parent (and a teacher) who trusts the truth of who God is—and where He is in relationship with us, especially when we struggle.
- Struggle is a gift because it is a reason to connect—and let oxytocin flow freely! This gift is for us, too—when we struggle. Love invites us to change our minds—when we agree with truth. Love untangles confusion and restores order to chaos. This is living! There is great hope.
- God is with you—and He is for you. He is beside you, with His arm around you, looking at the truth of your struggle WITH you.



STAGE THREE

Aiming at a New Target

This stage focuses on the summary of my research—after 35 years of observing educational settings and philosophies, and my work with families and children: When we aim at the target of performance, maturity always suffers. When we aim at the target of maturity, performance goes off the charts.



[**Download: Considerations & Questions worksheet**](#)



[**Watch the Stage Three Video**](#)

As you watch the video, take notes and reflect on the video content using the Considerations and Questions worksheet.

Here are a few key points from the video:

- The worldview and belief system that each of us grows up in affects our choices. Our choices will make history—and the next generation will lead the countries of the future.
- “The evidence of maturity is our capacity to be loved and to love others.” (From *Education by Design, Not Default* by Janet Newberry)
- Love is a fuel of maturity. People who are loved well—love well. Restored people, restore. Freed people, free people.
- In a transformational relationship, “I get” because “I need.” In a transactional relationship, “I get” (prizes, privileges, grades, paychecks, screen time) because “I comply”—or because “I earn.”
- Earning doesn’t help children grow up. Trusting love does.

- By design, I live in a maturity-rich culture—enjoying work, struggle, leisure, and play in relationships that lead me with truth and love. Struggle is an important part of a maturity rich culture. Struggling well in truth increases my capacity to receive love.
- By default, I live in a performance-obsessed culture—stuck in a “perform/pain relief” cycle. My days are filled with compliance—and demands to perform and earn. I trust that whatever I am earning will eventually satisfy me, so I keep performing to earn more. Or, I quit.
- Struggle is an important part of a maturity-rich culture. Struggling well in truth builds strength and increases my capacity to receive love.
- The best hope for misbehavior is maturity!
- It has never been God’s design for us to live life striving to be good enough in transactional relationships.
- We are created to dream, and to make an impact on our families and our world for good.
- A new definition for R.E.S.T: R is for relational. E is for emotional. S is for spiritual. T is for truth. When our relational life, our emotional experiences, and our spiritual life are anchored in truth, our souls are at R.E.S.T.



Download: Work, Struggle, Leisure, Play Chart

The downloadable resource for this stage offers more than fifty ways to get started thinking about a full life—and a free life. The resource is divided into four categories: work, struggle, leisure, and play. These are all parts of life by design. Use this resource as a reference for the kind of work a child needs to learn how to do—to live life as a young adult. The experiences in the column labeled “struggle” are offered because they may actually be real struggles for one or more of your children.

Life by design offers us many opportunities to learn how to struggle well in truth. It’s helpful to see these experiences listed with the work and leisure and play—because it helps us begin to expect struggles as part of a natural life—instead of be surprised by struggle, and respond in fear or shame.



STAGE FOUR

Creating a Schedule that Works for You

This stage focuses on thinking intentionally about creating a homeschool schedule that helps build maturity in your child's life.



Download: Considerations & Questions worksheet



Watch the Stage Four Video

As you watch the video, take notes and reflect on the video content using the Considerations and Questions worksheet.

Here are a few key points from the video:

- “In all my years in education, there’s no other word that invites as much fear—in parents or in children—as the word ‘behind.’ Fear is shame’s big brother. Together, they offer a toxic cocktail as daily fuel.”
- There are three vital ways to support maturity as a homeschool parent:
 - Build relationships of trust—and engage in ways that meet real needs. Help your child build mature habits.
 - Choose curriculum wisely. Growing in maturity requires mature choices. (More in stage five!)
 - Create an intentional daily (and weekly) schedule. Be mindful of the rhythm of life by design. Plan for work, struggle, leisure, and play—in relationship.
- There is a master plan: we can live life by design, not default.
- The rhythm of your family life doesn’t have to flow with the cultural current. Moving away from the cultural chaos is perhaps one reason you’ve chosen to homeschool.

- “May the Lord establish you in healthy, divine rhythm of life. May He inspired you to make choices that are good and life-giving for you. May He strengthen you in mind, body, and spirit. Where you’re broken, may He restore; when you’re weary, may He refresh; when you’re fearful, may He revive faith.”—Susie Larson
- “However many years anyone may live, let them enjoy them all.”—Ecclesiastes 11:8 (Sally Anne Gist)
- “If we are to help our good kids become good adults, we must give them good stories. Stories about heroes that will give them a vision of how to live well in the story God has called them to.”—Sally Clarkson
- “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”—Matthew 11: 28-30 (The Message)
- “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God peace will be with you.”—Philippians 4:8-9 (ESV)
- We want our children to move away from home into a good life—not just to a good college. Childhood is about growing up—and becoming a young adult that has experienced life and love, not simply success.
- This is one of the great advantages of homeschooling—you are living life together...not simply moving through a schedule of compliance. Homeschool can be so much more than simply school at home.



Download: This Is Us in the Morning Resource

Stage four is all about creating a schedule that works for you—and schedules that work are schedules that start mornings off in your home with the energy that come from love and good cheer. The This Is Us in the Morning resource is a chart that teaches your children how your family moves through a mature and joyful morning routine. The chart

comes with a video that walks you through this resource. That video will guide you step-by-step, so you'll know exactly how to use this valuable tool. Download the resource and watch the coordinating video now.



Watch: This Is Us in the Morning Instructional Video



Watch: The Fireside Chat with Janet (Facebook Live)

There's a second video in the Stage Four resource section on the John 15 Academy membership site. It is a Facebook Live video I recorded one night next to a fire, outside the Airstream we call home. I offered the fireside chat on Facebook because I wanted to share some thoughts about starting your day as a family—especially as a homeschool family.



Download: Sample Schedules

Inside Stage Four, you will also find several sample schedules. As you consider the sample schedules, remember there is freedom to personalize them to fit your family. Print out the schedule that matches with the age of your child. When we get to Stage Five where we discuss making good curriculum choices, look at the sample schedules side-by-side with the curriculum suggestions—and begin to see the vision for your school day.



STAGE FIVE

Choosing the Best Curriculum

This stage focuses on **three important considerations** in the life of a homeschool student:

1. what a child needs to learn from **a good life lived in relationships of trust**—when they’re not doing what we’ve traditionally come to recognize as “education,”
2. the **curriculum** that is a part of their school day,
3. and the **worthy work** done in response to well-chosen curriculum and the valuable discussion of great books.



Download: Considerations & Questions worksheet



Watch the Stage Five Video

As you watch the video, take notes and reflect on the video content using the Considerations and Questions worksheet.

Here are a few key points from the video:

- Making good curriculum choices will help our children grow up—but they need more. Our children need the kind of experiences, at every age—that help them develop, and that build emotional fluency. These experiences include healthy struggle, leisure, and play.
- Achievement alone won’t solve the problem of prolonged immaturity. Living a full and free life is about so much more than good grades.
- (Re)reading Chapter 9 and Appendix B in **Education by Design, Not Default** is vital in **stage five**—focusing on the important considerations discussed in the text about your child’s stage of development.
- Autonomous work (for older students) is different than independent work. The goal of transformational education is not independence, but rather dependence on the new life of Christ-in-me and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. Autonomous work implies self-governance.

- Autonomous work is done in a mature relationship with myself, and from an internal motivation.
- John 15 Academy offers children an honest childhood, so we can offer the world trustworthy adults.
- When choosing curriculum, say YES to:
 - Living books—rich with living ideas, not simply facts, data, and technique.
 - Books and curriculum that are respectful of children as persons. Choose books with beautiful language, rather than standardized, pre-digested vocabulary.
 - Books that offer opportunities for deep conversations—instead of simply a list of questions to answer at the end of the chapter.
- When choosing curriculum, say NO to:
 - Twaddle. This is a word used by Charlotte Mason to describe a book that is void of living ideas—that offers simply something to do.
 - Immature books—including books with immature illustrations. What we offer children tells them who they are—and what we think they are created to love.
- There are generous curriculum lists included in this stage to help you choose great books for every age of development. These lists are suggestions, not requirements. You may choose different books—or use some of these suggestions, and not all.
- The bonus benefit, Janet’s Curriculum Closet, has other suggestions for Art and Math, and ideas to enrich Science, and other subjects.
- Stage six offers subject specific e-books to support your family’s work in Nature Study, Reading, Becoming A Writer, and The New Covenant. More e-books coming soon! What e-book would you like to see added? Send an email to janet@john15academy.com.
- Children need great curriculum and worthy work in response to good books. Worthy work is real work—not work done simply for the purpose of earning a grade.
- Narration is worthy work. Narration is telling back what has been read. A strong narration includes many details, told in correct sequence, and includes some of the author’s language. Different kinds of narrations include: oral, dictated, transcribed, and written.
- Transcription is worthy work. Transcription is simply copying—for the purpose of lingering in a well-chosen text. This work supports a child’s growth in spelling, grammar, punctuation, story sense, and the use of mature language.
- Writing thank you notes is worthy work—for children young and old. Writing paragraphs and essays is worthy work, too.



Download: Worthy Work PDF

This chart helps you choose worthy work for your children—in response to the beautiful curriculum you’re choosing. Reading a great book loses its appeal when children anticipate a dry worksheet or pre-digested questions to answer at the end of each chapter. Worthy work is real work.

Traditional assignments in school are for the purpose of earning a grade—and accumulating a grade point average. We do our children a disservice when we offer them busy work rather than work that helps them grow up. This WORTHY WORK chart includes many different kinds of responses to great books—and real learning. It also helps you begin to match the kind of work with the appropriate age of the child who will be ready to do the work.



Download: Curriculum Recommendations

These resources are generous curriculum lists to help you get started making intentional choices about great books for every age of development. These lists are suggestions, not requirements. You may choose different books—or use some of these suggestions, and not all. These curriculum lists are not “law.” John 15 Academy is not a program—it is a new design for education. As a parent—you know your child’s academic needs and what your relationship with your child needs. The resources are going to help you make choices that meet your real needs.

There are other ideas about curriculum in “Janet’s Curriculum Closet.” You’ll find suggestions (and links) to great Art curriculum, to Math-U-See (which is always my first suggestion for math curriculum,) and much more. If you need a suggestion for something that’s not on these lists, please ask. We’re always adding new choices to these lists—and we’re here to help.



STAGE SIX

Looking In Depth at Specific Subjects

This stage offers a deeper look into the vital work of helping our children of “grow up” instead of simply “measure up,” and the work of “considerations and questions” with children. This stage also offers a library of e-books targeting specific subjects.



Download: Considerations & Questions worksheet



Watch the Stage Six Video

Here are a few key points from this video:

- Education by design isn’t about simply measuring up—it’s about helping our children grow up and become young adults who are developing an appetite for a wide variety of subjects and interests.
- Growing up is evidenced by:
 - processing and moving through pleasant and unpleasant emotions in truth, not lies
 - making decisions based on values and convictions—not moods, marketing, or peer pressure
 - considering and questioning big ideas, and engaging in rich discussions
 - trusting who God says He is—and trusting He is for me
 - trusting who God says I am—instead of trusting lies or shame about my identity
 - developing the habit of humility—and asking others to help me sort lies from truth
- Students as young as approximately 10 years old and older can begin to write their own considerations and questions after the reading of a text in almost any subject, after going on a nature walk, or as a part of picture study. This simple exercise gives children the responsibility of building the habits of giving consideration—and the habit of wondering, which are very different habits than asking, “Is this for a grade?” or “Is this going to be on the test?”
- (Re)reading pages 94–96 in “Education by Design, Not Default” is important in stage six.



Read: All Things Reading e-book

The ideas in the e-book “All Things Reading” are for the purpose of helping children grow to love reading—more than simply earn tokens and stickers and good grades for reading. Reading isn’t a subject at school; reading is a relationship.



Read: All Things Nature Study e-book

The ideas in the e-book “All Things Nature Study” will lay a firm foundation for a love of life outdoors—and a year-long plan for making observations and discoveries in your own yard and neighborhood. Instructions are offered here for keeping a nature journal, too.



Read: Becoming a Writer e-book

The ideas in the e-book “Becoming A Writer” will guide you from helping a young child learn to form letters with sidewalk chalk to helping an older student write a 5-paragraph essay... and many vital steps in between. The e-book reminds us that composition is not a subject at school—rather, it is a journey of helping our children find their voice, and of making themselves known in a world that needs to hear what they have to say.



Read: The New Covenant e-book

The e-book that is “The New Covenant” is a single-year curriculum for Intermediate and/or High School students designed to help them wrestle with the theological truths that are the good news of the gospel. Every year, we will add another year of curriculum for this important area of study.



Read the blog post: The Joy of Raising Children Who Ponder

Look on the stage 6 page of the Academy website for a link to this blog post. It will offer you a deeper understanding of the use and the value of the worthy work of considerations and questions.

When we add new e-books to this stage of your membership—we’ll send you an email to let you know. Send us an email, too—to let us know what new e-books you’d love for us to create and add to this growing library. We always love hearing from you. Send your email to janet@john15academy.com.



STAGE SEVEN

Planning for Transcripts, Testing, and College Admissions

This stage offers the opportunity to consider [alternative ideas for keeping a record of your child's progress](#) as a homeschool student. This stage also shares some encouragement—true stories of students who have been awarded acceptance at the college of their choice, after traveling a non-traditional path in education.



Download: Considerations & Questions worksheet



Watch the Stage Seven Video

Here are a few key points from this video:

- Whatever we document—and whatever we record and report on—will always guide our day to day teaching and relationships with children.
- If our primary aim is performance, “getting enough grades” will guide our day to day teaching. These lessons will keep us busy, but not in the ways that help our children grow up.
- If our primary aim is maturity, discussions and worthy work in response to great books will guide our lesson plans. These lessons invite our children to experience the transformational power of trusting God and others—to lead them to truth. This is the work that builds maturity.
- The Report of Growth offered as a resource in this stage is an example. It is one way to provide feedback to your child about their growth in each subject, to provide a record of the curriculum and work completed as a part of the academic year, and a way to affirm growth and set specific goals for your child’s habits as a student.
- Take one step at a time learning to use the Report of Growth. Modify the document to use the ideas in a way that meets your child’s needs for the upcoming semester. Show your child the Report of Growth you’re going to use. Talk about the goals you have for growth—instead of grades.

- Traditional transcripts can be created using non-traditional report cards and a portfolio of your student's worthy work.
- Various sources are available in each state to help you create the kind of transcript you need for college applications. Find these sources for your family.
- Before you begin your homeschool journey, check the homeschool requirements for your state. Requirements vary greatly from state to state. Do your research and find the resources you need in your community.
- Homeschooling is the fastest growing category in primary education today. Colleges are excited about non-traditional transcripts. Students who have experienced an honest childhood—will graduate and enjoy life as trustworthy adults.
- We're here to help you. Ask your questions in the Facebook group if you are an Academy Leader or schedule an online consulting appointment with Janet. Contact Janet at janet@john15academy.com.



Download: The Report of Growth PDF

This Report of Growth is offered as an example. It shows one way to provide feedback to your child about their growth in each subject. It also provides a record of the curriculum and work completed as a part of the academic year, and it offers a way to affirm growth and set specific goals for your child's habits as a student. You can modify this Report to fit your own needs.



STAGE EIGHT

Loving Your Child Well: A Roadmap E-book

Stage 8 is an e-book offering real and practical ways parents can connect and love their children well. This one resource provides exactly what you need—practical next steps to take on your parenting journey now to help you trade transactional relationships for transformational relationships.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by the potential of the new ideas offered in John 15 Academy—and delighted by the hope all at the same time—this Roadmap e-book is a perfect place to linger for a while. Give yourself permission to take this journey a step at a time.

You'll be well equipped after trying out the practical ideas for every day parenting included in this one resource. This e-book is also a great place to land at the end of each semester—or to read again as a review each summer.



Watch the Video Introducing Stages 8–10

This video in this stage serves as an introduction to three different stages in your John 15 Academy journey with your family—and even though this video is about three stages, it is the shortest video in your membership. Stages 8, 9, and 10 are easy to follow, and they provide rich resources for you as a parent, as a spouse, and as a homeschool teacher.



Read Loving Your Child Well: A Roadmap E-book



STAGE NINE

Connect and Reconnect at Home

Stage 9 is a signature online course that offers 4 modules and 8 teaching videos about vital topics such as:

- Relationships, habits, and the ideas we're believing to be true.
- Moving Beyond Transparency—and experiencing life change in vulnerable relationships.
- Permission to have boundaries—and live with integrity.
- Oxytocin and Cortisol—and the power of living life together in love...instead of fear.

This online course will help you:

- Experience personal life change as you connect in trusting relationships.
- Be set free from exhausting and ineffective behavior management – in your own life, your marriage, and with your children.
- Find freedom from toxic emotions – your own, and others. Experience a wide range of emotions without allowing them in the driver's seat of your life.
- Gain strength from others – so you can build trusting relationships in your home
- Celebrate maturity! Love changes everything.



Download: Considerations & Questions worksheet

Because there are multiple videos and readings in this stage, you may want to print several copies of the considerations and questions worksheet. Use this sheet to take notes as you work your way through all the important elements of this stage.



Watch the Stage 9, Module 1 Introduction Video

In this first video, you'll learn about the impact and influence of our relationships, habits, and the ideas we're believing to be true. As you listen, begin to think about the power of your own relationships and habits—and the power of the ideas you're trusting to be true.



Read this Excerpt from Hannah Hurnards' *Hind's Feet on High Places*

Read these selections with the goal of noticing Much-Afraid's **relationships**, her **habits**, and the **ideas she trusts to be true**. Watch **how these impact and influence her life for good—or not**.

PART ONE

"Weeping May Endure for A Night" (Psalm 30:5)

Invitation to the High Places

The is the story of how Much-Afraid escaped from her Fearing relatives and went with the Shepherd to the High Places where "perfect love casteth out fear."

For several years Much-Afraid had been in the service of the Chief Shepherd, whose great flocks were pastured down in the Valley of Humiliation. She lived with her friends and fellow workers Mercy and Peace in a tranquil little white cottage in the village of Much-Trembling. She loved her work and desired intensely to please the Chief Shepherd, but happy as she was in most ways, she was conscious of several things which hindered her in her work and caused her much secret distress and shame.

In the first place she was a cripple, with feet so crooked that they often caused her to limp and stumble as she went about her work. She had also the very unsightly blemish of a crooked mouth which greatly disfigured both expression and speech and was sadly conscious that these ugly blemishes must be a cause of astonishment and offense to many who knew that she was in the service of the great Shepherd.

Most earnestly she longed to be completely delivered from these shortcomings and to be made beautiful, gracious, and strong as were so many of the Shepherd's other workers, and above all to be made like the Chief Shepherd himself. But she feared that there could be no deliverance from these two crippling disfigurements and that they must continue to mar her service always.

There was, however, another and even greater trouble in her life. She was a member of the Family of Fearings, and her relatives were scattered all over the valley, so that she could never really escape from them. An orphan, she had been brought up in the home of her aunt, poor Miss Dismal Forebodings, with her two cousins Gloomy and Spiteful and their brother Craven Fear, a great bully who habitually tormented and persecuted her in a really dreadful way.

Like most of the other families who lived in the Valley of Humiliation, all the Fearings hated the Chief Shepherd and tried to boycott his servants, and naturally it was a great offense to them that one of their own family should have entered his service. Consequently, they did all they could both by threats and persuasions to get her out of his employment, and one dreadful day they laid before her the family dictum that she must immediately marry her cousin

Craven Fear and settle down respectably among her own people. If she refused to do this of her own free will, they threatened to use force and compel her." (pp. 5-6)

[Later in the Chapter](#)

"She walked singing across the first field and was halfway over the next when suddenly she saw Craven Fear himself coming toward her. Poor Much-Afraid: for a little while she had completely forgotten the existence of her dreadful relatives, and now here was the most dreaded and detested of them all slouching toward her. Her heart filled with a terrible panic. She looked right and left, but there was no hiding place anywhere, and besides it was all too obvious that he was actually coming to meet her, for as soon as he saw her he quickened his pace and in a moment or two was right beside her.

With a horror that sickened her very heart she heard him say, "Well, here you are at last, little Cousin Much-Afraid. So we are to be married, eh, what do you think of that?" and he pinched her, presumably in a playful manner, but viciously enough to make her gasp and bite her lips to keep back a cry of pain.

She shrank away from him and shook with terror and loathing. Unfortunately, this was the worst thing she could have done, for it was always her obvious fear which encouraged him to continue tormenting her. If only she could have ignored him, he soon would have tired of teasing and of her company and would have wandered off to look for other prey. In all her life, however, Much-Afraid had never been able to ignore Fear. Now it was absolutely beyond her power to conceal the dread at which she felt." (pp. 12-13)

[Later in the chapter "Start for the High Places"](#)

"It was early morning of a beautiful day. The valley lay as though still asleep. The only sounds were the joyful laughter of the running streams and the gay little songs of the birds. The dew sparkled on the grass and the wild flowers glowed like little jewels. Especially lovely were the anemones, purple, pink and scarlet, which dotted the pastures everywhere, thrusting their beautiful little faces up through the straggling thorns. Sometimes the Shepherd and Much-Afraid walked over patches of thousands of tiny little pink or mauve blossoms, each minutely small and yet all together forming a brilliant carpet, far richer than any seen in a king's palace.

Once the Shepherd stooped and touched the flowers gently with his fingers, then said to Much-Afraid with a smile, "Humble yourself, and you will find that Love is spreading a carpet of flowers beneath your feet."

Much-Afraid looked at him earnestly. "I have often wondered about the wild flowers," she said. "It does seem strange that such unnumbered multitudes should bloom in the wild places of the earth where perhaps nobody sees them and the goats and the cattle can walk over them and crush them to death. They have so much beauty and sweetness to give and no one on whom to lavish it, nor who will even appreciate it."

The look the Shepherd turned on her was very beautiful. "Nothing my Father and I have made is ever wasted," he said quietly, "and the little wild flowers have a wonderful lesson to teach. They offer themselves so sweetly and confidently and willingly, even if it seems that there is no one to

appreciate them. Just as though they sang a joyous little song to themselves, that it is so happy to love, even though one is not loved in return.

"I must tell you a great truth, Much-Afraid, which only the few understand. All the fairest beauties in the human soul, its greatest victories, and its most splendid achievements are always those which no one else knows anything about, or can only dimly guess at. Every inner response of the human heart to Love and every conquest over self-love is a new flower on the tree of Love."

"Many a quiet, ordinary, and hidden life, unknown to the world, is a veritable garden in which Love's flowers and fruits have come to such perfection that it is a place of delight where the King of Love himself walks and rejoices with his friends.

Some of my servants have indeed won great visible victories and are rightly loved and reverenced by other men, but always their greatest victories are like the wild flowers, those which no one knows about. Learn this lesson now, down here in the valley, Much-Afraid, and when you get to the steep places of the mountains it will comfort you." (pp. 26-27)

In the chapter, "On the Shores of Loneliness"

This note: Sorrow and Suffering are guides the Good Shepherd has chosen to lead
Much-Afraid to the High Places.

"... Far away in the Valley of Humiliation, her relatives had been waiting the return of Pride with his victim, but as time passes and he did not return and Much-Afraid did not reappear it becomes obvious that he must have been unsuccessful in his undertaking and was too proud to admit it. They decided that reinforcements must be sent as soon as possible, before Much-Afraid could reach the really High Places and be altogether beyond their reach.

Spies were sent out, who met Pride and brought back word that Much-Afraid was nowhere on the mountains but was far away on the shores of the Sea of Loneliness. She was going in quite a different direction from the mountains altogether. This was unexpectedly delightful and encouraging news, and quickly suggested to them the best reinforcements to be sent to the help of Pride. There was complete unanimity in deciding that Resentment, Bitterness, and Self-Pity should hurry off at once to assist in bringing back Much-Afraid to her eagerly-awaiting relatives.

Off they went to the shores of Loneliness, and Much-Afraid now had to endure a time of really dreadful assaults. It is true that her enemies soon discovered that this was not the same Much-Afraid with whom they had to deal. They could never get within close reach, because she kept so near to Sorrow and Suffering and accepted their assistance so much more willingly than before. However, they kept appearing before her, shouting out their horrid suggestions and mocking her until it really seemed that wherever she went one or another popped up (there were so many hiding-places for them among the rocks) and hurled their darts at her.

"I told you so," Pride would shout viciously. "Where are you now, you little fool? Up on the High Places? Not much! Do you know that everyone in the Valley of Humiliation knows about this and is laughing at you? Seeking your heart's desire, eh, and left abandoned by him (just as I warned you) on the shores of Loneliness. Why didn't you listen to me, you little fool?"

Then Resentment would raise his head over another rock. He was extremely ugly to look at, but his was a horribly fascinating ugliness. Sometimes Much-Afraid could hardly turn her eyes away when he started at her boldly and shouted, "You know, Much-Afraid, you act like a blind idiot. Who is this Shepherd you follow? What sort of person is he to demand everything you have and take everything you offer and give nothing in return but suffering and sorrow and ridicule and shame? Why do you let him treat you like this? Stand up for yourself and demand that he fulfill his promise and take you at once to the High Places. If not, tell him that you feel absolved from all necessity to follow him any longer."

Bitterness would then break in with his sneering voice, "The more you yield to him, the more he will demand from you. He is cruel to you, and takes advantage of your devotion. All he has demanded from you so far is nothing to what he will demand if you persist in following him. He lets his followers, yes, even women and children, go to concentration camps and torture chambers and hideous deaths of all kinds. Could you bear that, you little whiner? Then you'd better pull out and leave him before he demands the uttermost sacrifice of all. Sooner or later, he'll put you on a cross of some sort and abandon you to it."

Self-Pity would chime in next, and in some dreadful way he was almost worse than any of the others. He talked so softly and in such a pitying tone that Much-Afraid would feel weak all over.

"Poor little Much-Afraid," he would whisper. "It is too bad, you know. You really are so devoted, and you have refused him nothing, absolutely nothing; yet this is the cruel way in which he treats you. Can you really believe when he acts toward you like this that he loves you and has your real good at heart? How can that be possible?"

"You have every right to feel sorry for yourself...." (pp. 48-50)



Watch the Stage 9, Module 1 Discussion Video

In this discussion video, listen as my friend Ashley and I discuss our considerations and questions from the first teaching video and the reading selection. Key points and practical solutions from module 1 include:

1. Connect with those who can help; connect with those who need help.
2. Trade bad habits for good ones—one at a time. Find someone who can help.
3. Trade lies for truth—about yourself, others—and God. Find someone who can help.



Download: Relationship, Habit, and Ideas PDF

Knowledge isn't enough. We need good relationships that help us build good habits, and we need the inspiration of good ideas. Use this inventory tool to think intentionally about the impact and influence of your relationship, habits, and the ideas you are trusting to be true.



Watch the Stage 9, Module 2 Video

Boundaries define our identity. We recognize each other because of the space we take up in our homes – and in each other’s lives. Because we have boundaries – we have something to offer. We offer ourselves.

Because we have boundaries, we can have integrity. Integrity means I know who I am and who I’m not. I can act and speak and relate based on my convictions and core values—I can be me. Without boundaries, we take the shape of our circumstances, or what people demand of us or need from us, or what we think will solve the problem or make someone happy.

Listen to the vital ideas about personal boundaries and integrity in this next video—and continue writing your considerations and questions to focus your reflections.



Read These Selections from *Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You and The Cure*

Read these selections and consider the ideas you’ve heard about in the video about boundaries. Think about the masks you may be tempted to wear, and why you may wear your masks.

Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You

by James G. Friesen, E. James Wilder, Anne M. Berlin, Rick Koepcke, and Maribeth Poole

“Will people grow up to be life-giving or life-draining? The family and community are the people who create the environment that nudges offspring in one of those two directions. One of those directions is guided by love bonds; the other is guided by fear bonds. That preparation for becoming a person, life-giving or life-draining, is then passed on to the next generation. We are all trained in this way to give others life – or to drain it from them.

But do not think that nothing can be done to correct faulty training. People create history – they become an active part of their world. The word “create” packs a lot of meaning. People can overcome shortcomings that result from faulty training, they can receive repair for traumas, and they can introduce improvements into the lives of those who are still in training. That is good news. People can help one another get unstuck and begin to mature once again. No wonder the Bible is so emphatic about loving one another, bearing each other’s burden, and being an active participant in the family of God!” (p. 49)

The Cure
by John Lynch, Bruce McNicol, and Bill Thrall

"I will – each of us will – be tempted to return to my mask each time I lose the confidence of my new identity. Daring to trust who Christ says I am, who He says He is in me, even when I feel I least deserve it and the old shame sweeps over me. This is the only way to keep the mask off, to keep feeling the cool breeze on my face.

There are times when it seems like those of us who believe in Jesus are wearing more masks, and we seem to wear them more often than those who don't believe! What's with that? The truth is, we face even more pressure as followers of Jesus. We are tempted to don our masks even more if we haven't trusted our identity.

All of us are tempted to wear a mask when

- we want to prove to others that we're worthy of their love;
- we want to prove to ourselves that we're worthy of being loved;
- we want others not to feel sorry for us;
- we fear if others see us truly, they won't want to know us;
- we want to be seen as great

Believers in Christ additionally are tempted to wear a mask when

- our failures tell us the experiment of grace didn't work;
- we want to prove to God that we're worth His choice to love us;
- we believe God wants us to fake it too, so He looks good;
- we want God to make our life work and our behavior seems like the price tag;
- we think God cares more about right behaviors than our trust and dependence;
- we think we're in competition with others, graded on a spiritual curve;
- our shame makes us believe we must assuage God's disgust in us.

Can you remember the first time you felt free enough to talk to God honestly? When you discovered you weren't hiding anything or pretending, no longer talking to Him in manufactured religious jargon? Maybe you just met Jesus, or maybe you first saw Him for who He truly is, in all His majesty, glory and goodness. It's a moment of freedom and raw unguarded hope like you'd never before imagined. It's like you could feel your own blood pulsing through your veins, so brightly alive! God waited an eternity for this moment. He knew He couldn't fully reveal Himself until He could cause you to risk trusting Him with who you really were. It was stunning. It took fear away. It broke lifelong patterns of dishonesty. People couldn't figure out what happened to you. You were wildly free, but safe. You were unguardedly alive, but more caring. You were full of life-giving joy, but more deeply sensitive to the pain in others. It painted your world in colors you didn't even know existed.

I had this same experience. But something happened in the following months and years. I lost confidence in His delight and new life in me was strong enough to haul away that giant mound of rotted cat food and mayonnaise, the failures I presumed stood between Him and me. I could point to aspects of my life that weren't changing fast enough. So, I gradually bought the sales pitch I'd have to find something else, something miraculous and mystical I'd receive if I could only prove I cared enough. I set about gallantly propping up my world.

Only now, because it was about God, the stakes were higher. I represented something other than just me, and the pressure was greater. Much greater. Soon, I was back trying to impress a God I imagined was growing more and more impatient with me. I learned to bluff, manipulating, and managing my persona to appear better than who I feared I was.

No one told me this two-faced life would severely stunt my growth.

Or that it would break my heart. No matter how many titles and accolades I accumulate, I remain wounded and immature – long on “success,” but short on dreams and substance. I admire people who live the truefaced life, but my loss of hope forces me to scramble for safety from behind a mask. The cost is horrific.

No one told me that when I wear a mask, only my mask receives love.

We can gain admiration and respect from behind a mask. We can even intimidate. But as long as we’re behind a mask, any mask, we will not be able to receive love. Then, in our desperation to be loved, we’ll rush to fashion more masks, hoping the next will give us what we’re longing for: to be known, accepted, trusted and loved.

This is no new phenomenon. Remember its source? God came in the cool of the day to be with Adam and Eve. He called out to a hiding Adam, “Where are you?” Though He knew very well where Adam was. Adam responded, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.”

Afraid. Naked. Hidden. These were the first steps of a dance we’ve been stumbling to ever since. We become afraid because something we did or was done to us makes us feel naked. This nakedness cannot endure remaining uncovered. Nothing is more embarrassing or vulnerable than nakedness. Not knowing another option, we hide ourselves. Our dance now follows nearly identical steps. This shame — this self-awareness of their “uncleanness” — prompted Adam and Eve to fashion masks from leaves to hide what they now feared was true about them. It wasn’t just that they had done something wrong. They were both convinced something was now uniquely and terribly wrong about them, with them. This is how shame works, and it’s different from guilt. Guilt wants to lead us to forgiveness, to be cleaned. Shame drives us to hide, convinced we cannot truly be forgiven or made clean. It forced them and has forced us to cover ourselves with whatever is available at the time.

So, Adam and Eve covered their nakedness with fig leaves. And it worked. No more shame, no more hiding. And they lived happily ever after...

Umm...no.

They still hid! This is the earliest record result of sin management. It will not work. It hasn’t ever worked. When I discover I’m still hiding, that probably should be the hint that whatever I’ve tried to cover my shame with hasn’t taken.

It wasn't until they trusted that God did something – providing His own covering for them – that they could be free from hiding and condemnation. This is still true for me, many centuries later. Any time I hurt another or make wrong choices, the way home is not by attempting to cover my failure through something I can do to pay God off. The way home is not effort, not amends, not heroic promise. The way home is trusting what God paid to cleanse me.

This life in Christ is not about what I can do to make myself worthy of His acceptance, but about daily trusting what He has done to make me worthy of His acceptance.

Back to the garden. On that day, all humanity learned how to look over shoulders; to dart glances; to say one thing and mean another; to hide fear, deceit and shame behind a nervous smile. That day, we learned how to give the appearance we're someone other than who we actually are.

We begin to lose hope we can be "fixed." So, we cover up. We put on a mask and begin bluffing. After a while, we can barely remember how to live any other way." (pp. 27-31)



Watch the Stage 9, Module 2 Discussion Video

Keeping your boundaries offers your child an important lesson—they know who you are, and what you trust—and that your decisions are based on your convictions instead of their emotions. As you watch this discussion video, listen as Ashley and I discuss a few vital ideas—and write your own on your considerations and questions page.



Download: Connect and Reconnect Resource

This quick chart will show you a visual difference between what it looks like to connect and reconnect vs. to disconnect. It's often helpful to remember—behavior is evidence of what I believe to be true about me, you, and God. When I disconnect, I am believing a lie about you—or me, or the circumstances. Print out this chart and use it as a bookmark, put it on your fridge, or your bathroom mirror. When you realize you're disconnected—choose to re-connect. Connection brings healing and strength.



Download: Identity, Integrity, and Immunity

Life can get tangled. We do what we don't want to do, and don't do what we really desire to do. We can experience a life of integrity; this resource tells us how. The freedom of new life is ours when we allow our identity, integrity, and the immune system that is our life lived in trusted relationships to line up in love. There is great hope.



Watch the Stage 9, Module 3 Video

Transparency, authenticity, and vulnerability are popular buzz words these days. We sometimes use them as if they were synonyms, but they're not. Transparency means we're open—and not hiding anything; authenticity means what we offer to others is valid and accurate.

Vulnerability, in its most beautiful offering, means I'm willing to be transparent and authentic because I need—and trust—your help. We say, "I'm hurt" or "I'm afraid" in the same conversation with "and I don't want to stay this way."

Listen to the vital ideas about transparency and vulnerability in this next video—and continue writing your considerations and questions to focus your own reflections.



Read this Excerpt from The Return of the Prodigal Son

Read this selection and consider the ideas you've heard about in the video about asking for help in safe relationships. Think about the freedom that is offered when we trust God that we are who He says we are.

The Return of the Prodigal Son
by Henri Nouwen

Henri J. M. Nouwen was a Catholic priest who taught at several theological institutes and universities in his home country of the Netherlands and in the United States. He shared the final years of his life with people with mental and physical disabilities at the L'Arche Daybreak Community in Toronto, Canada. He died in 1996. He authored many books on the spiritual life, including *Reaching Out*, *The Wounded Healer*, *The Inner Voice of Love*, and *The Return of the Prodigal Son*.

Prologue: Encounter with A Painting – The Poster

"A seemingly insignificant encounter with a poster presenting a detail of Rembrandt's The Return of the Prodigal Son set in motion a long spiritual adventure that brought me to a new understanding of my vocation and offered me new strength to live it. At the heart of this adventure is a seventeenth-century painting and its artist, a first-century parable and its author, and a twentieth-century person in search of life's meaning.

The story begins in the fall of 1983 in the village of Trosly, France, where I was spending a few months at L'Arche, a community that offers a home to people with mental handicaps. Founded in 1964 by a Canadian, Jean Vanier, the Trosly community is the first of more than ninety L'Arche communities spread throughout the world.

One day I went to my friend Simone Landrien in the community's small documentation center. As we spoke, my eyes fell on a large poster pinned on her door. I saw a man in a great red cloak tenderly touching the shoulders of a disheveled boy kneeling before him. I could not take my eyes away. I felt drawn by the intimacy between the two figures, the warm red of the man's cloak, the golden yellow of the boy's tunic, and the mysterious light engulfing them both. But, most of all, it was the hands—the old man's hands—as he touched the boy's shoulders that reached me in a place where I had never been reached before." (pp. 3-4)

The following quote is from

Introduction: The Younger Son, The Elder Brother, and The Father

"It was during this period of immense inner pain that another friend spoke the word that I most needed to hear and opened up the third phase of my spiritual journey. Sue Mosteller, who had been with the Daybreak community from the early seventies and had played an important role in bringing me there, had given me indispensable support when things had become difficult, and had encouraged me to struggle through whatever needed to be suffered to reach true inner freedom. When she visited me in my "hermitage" and spoke with me about the Prodigal Son, she said, "Whether you are the younger son or the elder son, you have to realize that you are called to become the father."

Her words struck me like a thunderbolt because, after all my years of living with the painting and looking at the old man holding his son, it had never occurred to me that the father was the one who expressed most fully my vocation in life.

Sue did not give me much chance to protest: "You have been looking for friends all your life; you have been craving for affection as long as I've known you; you have been interested in thousands of things; you have been begging for attention, appreciation, and affirmation left and right. The time has come to claim your true vocation – to be a father who can welcome his children home without asking them any questions and without wanting anything from them in return. Look at the father in your painting and you will know who you are called to be. We, at Daybreak, and most people around you don't need you to be a good friend or even a kind brother. We need you to be a father who can claim for himself the authority of true compassion."

Looking at the bearded old man with his full red cloak, I felt deep resistance to thinking about myself in that way. I felt quite ready to identify myself with the spendthrift younger son or the resentful elder son, but the idea of being like the old man who had nothing to lose because he had lost all, and only to give, overwhelmed me with fear. Nevertheless, Rembrandt died when he was sixty-three years old and I am a lot closer to that age than to the age of either of the two sons. Rembrandt was willing to put himself in the father's place; why not I?

The year and a half since Sue Mosteller's challenge has been a time to begin claiming my spiritual fatherhood. It has been a slow and arduous struggle, and sometimes I still feel the desire to remain the son and never to grow old. But I also have tasted the immense joy of children coming home and laying hands on them in a gesture of forgiveness and blessing. I have come to know in a small way what it means to be a father who asks no questions, wanting only to welcome his children home." (pp. 21-23)



Watch the Stage 9, Module 3 Discussion Video

Vulnerability is a great gift in a relationship of trust. As you watch this discussion video, listen as Ashley and I discuss a few vital ideas—and write your own on your considerations and questions page.



Download: Sharing Stories at the Table

Our children need us to model healthy vulnerability. They need to learn the language of sharing our needs in mature ways—and asking for help. This resource walks you through a sequence that helps you get started modeling this kind of healthy vulnerability with your family.



Watch the Stage 9, Module 4 Video

When our children are very young, we know they need our help to learn and grow up. Oxytocin flows freely from parents to infants. But when our children get a bit older, we reach for control—and begin manipulating their behavior. Trying to control behavior isn't a realistic or healthy parenting strategy. Watch this video to learn why—and to hear some practical steps to keep taking to help your child grow up.



Read this Excerpt from *The Gift in You*

Dr. Caroline Leaf is a neuroscientist who has found proof that love casts out fear! Read this short selection from one of her books and consider the scientific research that proves—there is great hope!

[**The Gift in You: Discover New Life through Gifts Hidden in Your Mind**](#)
[**by Dr. Caroline Leaf**](#)

"...an attitude is a cluster of thoughts with emotional flavor, and every type of emotion has one of only two roots – love or fear. Love and fear are the root emotions, and all other emotions grow from these.

For example, out of love flow joy, peace, happiness, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control, compassion, calmness, inspiration, excitement, hope, anticipation and satisfaction. Out of fear flow hate, anger, bitterness, rage, irritation, unforgiveness, unkindness, worry, self-pity, envy, jealousy, obsession, and cynicism.

The discovery that love and fear cannot coexist in our brains is revolutionary. In fact, scientists have researched the anatomy and physiology of love and fear right down to a molecular, genetic and epigenetic level that can be described in detail.

They have found a deeper system in the brain concerned with positive love emotions and negative fear emotions. They have discovered that these two systems cannot coexist, that at any one conscious moment, we will be operating in one or the other for each cluster of thoughts we think.

Science is showing us that there is a massive “unlearning” of negative toxic thoughts when we operate in love. The brain releases a chemical called oxytocin, which literally melts away the negative toxic thought clusters so that rewiring of new non-toxic circuits can happen. This chemical also flows when we trust and bond and reach out to others. Love literally wipes out fear!

We also have another amazing chemical called dopamine that works with oxytocin. It flows as we expect and anticipate something. It also puts us on heightened alert to build new memories as we imagine helping someone do well in a test or restore a relationship, for example. It gives us a thrilling surge of energy and excitement and confidence and motivation to carry on.

And then as we actually help someone do well in the test or restore the relationship, endorphins and serotonin are released that make us feel great. So, when we do good things and reach out in love, God blesses us by helping our brain detox and increase our motivation and wisdom, helping us negotiate life more successfully.

We see this scientific discovery confirmed in Scripture:

“There is no fear in love (dread does not exist), but full-grown (complete, perfect) love turns fear out of doors and expels every trace of terror! For fear brings it with it the thought of punishment, and (so) he who is afraid has not reached the full maturity of love (is not yet grown into love’s complete perfection)” (I John 4:18 AMP).“



Watch the Stage 9, Module 4 Discussion Video

Parenting without manipulation is increasingly becoming a lost art in our culture. And manipulation doesn't build trust—love does. As you watch this discussion video, listen for the practical next steps to take to build a relationship of trust with your family—without fear.



Read: Once Upon a Time with God

My heart for my children and grandchildren is for them to read the Genesis story, celebrating the love of the Father—instead of hiding in shame with Adam and Eve. Enjoy sharing this story with your children or grandchildren, too. Enjoy the love of the Father for yourself!



STAGE TEN

Loving Your Child on the Road to Maturity

Stage 10 is a signature online course that teaches you how to:

- Equip children to become adults, instead of spending years stuck in adolescence
- Harness the power of love, instead of depending on transaction-based behavior management
- Help young people build a personal GPS of integrity, rather than experience a life of chaos guided by emotions and peer pressure
- Offer life-giving inspiration, fun, and leisure rather than a life of addictive sensational entertainment and cheap thrills.

There are 4 modules and 8 teaching videos in this course—all of which are designed to support your relationship with your child—and that equip you to love them well.



Download: Considerations & Questions worksheet

Because there are multiple videos and readings in this stage, you may want to print several copies of the considerations and questions worksheet. Use this sheet to take notes as you work your way through all the important elements of this stage.



Watch Stage 10, Module 1 video

Yes, our children will all experience puberty, but what if adolescence is a false tradition? Can our children really skip this decade that seems to be a long delay in personal development? Watch this video to learn about God's design for children to become young adults—and how we can help.



Read two blog posts

Read "The Birth of Adolescence" and "Making Adolescence History." You will find links to both of these blog posts on the Stage 10, Module One page of the Academy website.



Watch Stage 10, Module 1 discussion video

Leah is a great friend—and a mom of three young adults. Listen to our discussion of these transformational ideas about children growing up to be young adults in this next video—and write down your own considerations and questions.



Download: New Life Cycle PDF

By design, we are biologically and neurologically “wired” to experience life as an infant who grow up to be a child, who grows up to be a young adult, who becomes a parent (even a spiritual parent), who grows up to become an elder. This life cycle is dependent on receiving the love we need in safe relationships of trust. Read some of the key needs of each stage of life by design, and what happens when we don’t trust the love that meets our needs.



Watch Stage 10, Module 2 video

As parents, we have many false traditions in relationships; we don’t even realize we’ve turned some of our most sacred relationships into secular acts of compliance and pleasing. This video helps you learn how to offer strength and affirmation as gifts of love to our children, so they’ll receive what they need to grow up. You’ll learn how to equip your child to “trust and obey” instead of “please and comply.” Maturity is the fruit of trusting obedience; there is great hope!



Read this excerpt from The Cure & Parents

“Over time, if rules are all we use to parent, our kids can learn a respectful response of begrudging compliance. They can end up doing the behavior to avoid a penalty and never get to learn the beauty of heartfelt obedience.”

Linger in the wisdom of our friends from Trueface as you read this selection—and make note of your considerations and questions.

The Cure & Parents (We've been waiting for this, friends!)

We're at a crossroads here. We can take the low road of trading relational life for what promises to fix our kids and us. We may choose the external fixes because we are afraid. We know the issues we struggled with growing up and we truly want to stop our kids before they have to experience that pain and failure. But the “fix” creates an unforeseen consequence often worse than the issue it was

brought in to fix. Sarah has gotten in touch with this form of parenting which has helped her feel more in control. But the unforeseen consequence is a growing disengagement with her children's hearts.

"Sin management" is the misguided presumption that we're supposed to figure out how to master our own bad behavior. Or the behavior of others. And until we can, we are to fake it and give the appearance of maturity. The sin management mindset usually starts with the crippling theological conviction that, while we may be saved, we are only saved sinners. Not yet really saints. While perhaps sincere, this theological construct is ultimately immensely destructive. We strive hard to please God by our better behaviors but have little dependence or trust in anything more than self-abnegating willpower, sincerity, and a wavering ability to say no.

This is the oldest and most dangerous false approach to healing and maturing. But to be fair, it has been heaped on us in a thousand ways. Our entire culture tells us to be self-reliant and pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. In addition to that, many of us in Christian cultures are fairly certain that we are most often a disappointment to God. And to others. So, we keep desperately trying to be good enough while convinced we never will be. We resemble the dog chasing his tail.

Sadly, this bogus logic has infected so many of our churches. And such warped theology is not easily abandoned unless we're convinced there is a better way. And we can end up imposing this broken system on our own children. But God has given us a better motivation for our children than just staying out of trouble. A better reason to do right than "because I told you so." A better way to teach them heartfelt obedience instead of an external compliance. God has given us the most excellent on-ramp to their hearts—that of love.

Engendering heartfelt obedience takes more time. But compliance will leave us with anesthetized, presentable-looking teenagers who will adopt a very different lifestyle once they leave our home.

To understand a way home from compliance, we must begin to understand how God has created us to move from rules to guidelines.

In children's early development, rules are a profound and wonderful protection. Rules protect their hearts and give them a way of safely interacting with their world. But without a plan to gradually release them to discover guidelines and principles, rules alone become a destructive life pattern and an inadequate motivation for life.

As children grow and mature, guidelines must begin to replace rules.

A rule is a directive or prohibition aimed at governing a specific behavior. It is inflexible and comes with a direct penalty if violated. Early on, it can give healthy protection and boundaries for children before they can morally reason through wrong and right, dangerous and safe behavior. Rules are a great gift from the Father. They never go completely off the screen in our lives. Businesses, government, and societies always work best with rules and laws in place.

But the human heart needs much more. And much less.

Over time, if rules are all we use to parent, our kids can learn a resentful response of begrudging compliance. They can end up doing the behavior to avoid a penalty and never get to learn the beauty of heartfelt obedience.

Eventually, a rule for a rule's sake can create a rebellion similar to what Israel experienced towards the Law. Israel rebelled because they largely didn't trust the Person of God. They were only afraid of the authority of God. They most often didn't live out of relationship, but only an external, begrudging compliance to the Law. The heart never got a chance to obey. The Law was actually employed by God so their unrighteousness would be revealed, their sin would increase, and they would be compelled to cry out for the Messiah.

So, like Israel with God, our children, if they don't learn to trust us, may learn only to be afraid of our authority.

A guideline is much different. A guideline is worthless to a one-year-old, but wonderfully life-giving to a ten-year-old. It gives more direction than directive. It employs a principle, a way of seeing, to help children understand how to navigate a variety of life decisions. The guideline is relationally communicated, allowing children to own their choices in heartfelt obedience rather than compliance to a rule. It communicates consequences and the basis, protection, and freedom within the truth being given. A guideline teaches excellent skills for navigating new choices ahead, choices that rules can never anticipate.

In brief, a rule says, "You will not do this or else." A guideline says, "Here is why you would choose these behaviors and not those. And I'll stand with you as you mature in these choices."

Let's look at an example of how we might start with rules and gradually move into guidelines at various ages.

Imagine standing with your child, looking out at the lightly traveled neighborhood street in front of your house.

When your child is two, the rule is clear and direct, without conditions or exceptions: "Do not go into the street." End of conversation. You, of course, surround the rule with your commitment, love, and consistency. But the rule is inflexible and there are age-appropriate consequences, explained and consistently enforced, for violating it. Because you love your children, you give the rule sometimes long before they are able to understand your reasons in giving it.

When your child is five, that same rule starts to be nuanced with further explanation, reasoning and consequences. "Don't go into the street without looking both ways for cars. Do you understand how important it is to look both ways? Sometimes there are cars coming that you won't be able to see right away. We want to you to be safe because we love you so much. But if you ignore what I'm asking, you won't be able to cross the street to see your friends."

When your child is nine, you might find yourself with a football in your hand, asking your child, "You think we'd be okay to play catch in the street? What should we be concerned about?" You are now standing with your child, together exploring the risks, freedoms and consequences of an event. This

conversation will now also inform future, yet unseen opportunities and dangers. The rule has now morphed beautifully into a life-giving guideline.

Pretty cool stuff! Parents and kids learning how to navigate life together. Maybe your nine-year-old child in the street would smile and respond to you, "Dad, I've seen your passes. I'm not sure we're safe on any street."

Now, let's look at how we can help our children develop convictions. For convictions help form guidelines.

Consider a daughter's developing understanding of modesty.

At age sixteen it might not be good to start explaining modesty with these words; "You will not be leaving this house with that outfit on!" (Not that almost every parent of an adolescent hasn't said those words at one time or another.)

Remember, a guideline says, "Here is why you would choose these behaviors and not those. And I will stand with you as mature into these choices."

A conviction is a particular belief or position which becomes your own.

An age-related progression of conversations, modeling, and guidance helps nurture convictions. So maybe early on a mom begins a running conversation with her daughter as they walk through their daily lives, presenting from many angles how to begin to make choices consistent with who she wants to be.

Maybe at around age eight or nine you present this question: "How do I want to present myself to the world?" Your daughter may not have considered this before. But even at nine she can begin to understand how choices in the way she dresses and presents herself reflects her femininity, her identity, her person.

Somewhere around ten, you might help draw her into an awareness of the consequences of other girl's choices, in her own world and in the media surrounding her.

Again, all of this is in the context of seeing life together. It presupposes ongoing conversations, where such questions are not jarring or out of the blue.

Maybe by twelve, you begin to process together what choices of modesty or immodesty might affect boys.

There is no exact month when any discussion is best to begin. But, there is an intentionality in watching for readiness to reason out the motives and values for their behaviors. There are many clumsy moments on this trail, more missteps than great moments of insight. There are more blank stares than "Oh, yes, my parent, I am beginning to see how this would change my life for the better. May I now serve you by setting the table and sorting out the recycling bin?"

Perhaps you get the point.

Everything about a guideline is more involved, more nuanced, and messier. Everything about a rule is more simple, clear, enforceable, and clean. But rules, unfortunately, don't create lasting, heartfelt obedience much after the age of nine.

If we don't understand these distinctions, we'll continue on the rule-making trajectory because it gives us the illusion of control. But, as the Clawsons heard in the podcast, the payoff is invariably this: rules will create either rebellious or compliant children.

Rules ultimately do not allow me to live out of the motivation of love. Only a motivation of love can free me to heartfelt obedience with sufficient and sustaining life motivation. A motivation that gets to trust the direction of Jesus instead of being compelled to comply with the commands of Jesus.

Compliance, though not an ideal state, can keep the yelling down for a while. And a home with less yelling gives everyone a chance to breathe and not be at each other's throats. But maybe we start to realize things are growing more distant and rigid. We admit it, if only to ourselves.

But now we're so tired.

We've been working so hard just making a living, securing their future, and figuring out how to afford the next vacation. A home of disrespectful preteenagers fighting with parents and each other was not an option. So, maybe we brought in a system that promised peace, order, and control. A consistent, well-structured system of clear and inviolable rules.

But maybe no one told us this way of running a home has a short shelf life. Or that our entire family would eventually resent it. And maybe by the time we discover it, it seems too late to go back and find our playfulness and closeness. Our kids have learned to find their own friends, their world, their "place where they can feel more themselves. We still have meals together, still wake up in the same house, still all go to their sporting events. But the distance is there.

Learning to offer guidelines means we have to learn to think through life in terms of guidelines. It involves asking God to teach us the relational reasons behind our own choices. Many of us grew up in a house of rules, long after they were effective. We may have complied or rebelled and then just sort of settled into a vague semi-adherence to authority. We learned to parrot right answers. We learned to appear different than we actually were. We learned to turn off our hearts to some degree and look right more than being real. And it hasn't worked very well. We feel compromised in our own lives. We can't even live in the very system we are trying to promote to our kids! This can keep us feeling vaguely guilty most of the time. And unfit to parent out of our character and integrity."



Watch Stage 10, Module 2 discussion video

There are certain things we are designed to experience in life if we are going to mature in the ways we're created to mature. Listen as Leah and I admit talk about the idea that needs are not

weaknesses—and so much more. Write your considerations and questions during this video—specifically about our God-given needs.



Download: Trusting Love to Meet My Needs PDF

We are all created with God-given needs for security, acceptance, attention, trust, direction, protection, and significance. This resource reminds us of the ways Scripture tells us God meets these needs and practical ways to experience the love of God and others. This resource also offers some “new language” for sharing the love that meets our needs with others.



Download: Love is the Process of Meeting Needs PDF

This resource shares critical information about the life we experience when our God-given needs are not met. God meets all of our needs every day—and trust lets His love in to our lives. Use this resource to help identify areas of your life (and the lives of your children) where you/they can begin to let love can heal wounds and support healthy development—because you’re trusting the love of God and others to meet your needs.



Watch Stage 10, Module 3 video

The relationships, habits, and ideas we offer our children—and allow them to trust and enjoy—will have an impact and influence in their lives for good—or not! We become what we behold, what we experience, and what we receive. Our children do, too. That’s good news when we behold, experience, and receive truth.

An inspiration-filled life sustains and satisfies. This video offers practical ideas about offering our children the abundant, life-giving influence of love. Make notes about how to offer good, true, and beautiful experiences and ideas to your family—so they can taste and see! There is great hope.



Read this excerpt from Jacquelyn Carole: A Story of the Transformational Power of Love

The reading selection on the next page is an autobiography of sorts. “Jacque” and “John” are—in real life—Janet and Doug. I wrote this piece to highlight the power of trusting the love that meets our God-given needs. What do you notice in the story? Write your considerations and questions after you read.

Jacquelyn Carole was born June 13, 1962 in Marshall, Texas.

Her conception was unplanned. Her parents were married—and yet, her sister, their first daughter, was only 10 1/2 months old when Jaque was born.

Jaque worked for love even before she breathed air outside the womb.

Having two babies less than a year old would be difficult for anyone; it was more than difficult for Jaque's parents. Her dad was studying theology at East Texas Baptist College; he would serve as a Southern Baptist preacher until Jacque was in middle school.

Jacque's mom—a delightful young lady—had worked for love from the beginning, too. Her mom, Jacque's grandmother, struggled with crippling mental illness. Jacque's mom breathed it in her whole life...and now she struggled, too.

The combination of tangled theology and mental illness left a constant aroma of uneasiness hanging in the air for Jacque. Second-hand smoke.

Her sister didn't seem to notice the odor, or it didn't have the same effect on her. Maybe being first and being planned for protected her. Unknowingly, Jacque determined to be first in as many ways as she could.

Jacque was first to the baptismal font, probably as much from a motive of beating her sister there as declaring to the world that she'd made a 100 on the salvation exam.

In Jacque's mind, she was celebrating that she had finally asked for help. Jesus said, "Yes" when she'd ask Him to clean the sin from her heart, like too much mud on a "supposed to be clean" kitchen floor.

For the next 40 years or so, Jacque pictured Jesus standing in the kitchen, leaning on a mop with a scowl—or at least a disappointed frown—on His face every day when she ran in wearing her muddy boots.

She didn't know. She hadn't experienced the fresh air of imparted righteousness.

She'd experienced working to earn her place in the hearts of her family who loved her, and weren't ever, it seemed maybe only to Jacque, quite ready to make room for her in the ways of unconditional love.

Jacque was ok with earning love; she had a feisty and determined spirit. "I can be good enough," she dreamed. This was her toxic love affair with God, too.

And her first husband.

And her second.

Life was a series of transactions for Jacquelyn. "I'll do this to get that," was a strategy tied like an anchor to her work ethic and her relationships.

This mantra found her perfectly at home in the industry of education. "I'll do this to get that," is the school song everywhere. She knew it well—and sang it as good or better than most.

Jacque was a good teacher, and a great school administrator. She stood before her faculty and declared, "These children will not fail on my watch." And her teachers went back to their classrooms and looked at each other with a hint of fear in their eyes.

"I think she means it," they said to each other.

The fluorescent lights shone especially bright as they hung the newly earned "Exemplary" sign on the brick wall in the foyer of the school. The children could read harder books and do harder math problems. Hurray!

And the boy that struggled greatly with shyness in first grade was now a depressed fifth grader who'd passed the test. The girl that bullied everyone when she'd moved into the school in second grade went to middle school with a decent report card—and a load of anger that just seemed to grow bigger by the day.

Jacque was a few years into her second marriage by this time. It was going no better than the first. Her husband hated his job—and life, mostly. He longed for land and the outdoors, rather than the subdivision life that seemed to be too small for him to catch his breath.

Almost as a joke, Jacque and husband #2 went to Fredericksburg, Texas to spend a three-day Valentine weekend for the purpose of husband #2 interviewing for a new job as a ranch foreman.

He'd never been a ranch foreman before—and they soon learned he was the 62nd applicant for the prized ranch position.

More than 1,000 pristine acres nestled in the front yard of Enchanted Rock. The interview seemed more like a conversation and a tour of rolling hills and oak trees the size of history and views of hill country expanse as big as the starry night sky overhead.

The three-day weekend had been a reprieve from the tight spaces of the suburbs, nothing was expected from the conversation that had happened instead of an interview.

Four days later, Jacque received a call from husband #2. The couple that owned the ranch had called to offer him the job.

And now the details. A minimal hourly salary complimented by the provision of a place to live on the ranch. Life was being offered, complete with a 14' x 70' "brand new" mobile home—including a mismatched and very old washer and dryer, just off the dining area.

Husband #2 wanted to hope that the change could happen. Jacque saw the hope, even as it hid behind his doubts.

And they just couldn't make the numbers add up.

Jacque would need to resign from her established position as an administrator in a large public school district, complete with insurance and retirement benefits. They would need to sell their "normal home" with an alarm and a sprinkler system and a laundry room and a walk-in master closet in a well to do subdivision.

And they had four children. Three of the four were either in college or about to be. Three of the four were girls, all about to get married.

Husband #2 went to bed Saturday night prepared to call and decline the offer on Sunday. Breathing room would have to be postponed for now.

Jacque couldn't sleep. When she climbed out of bed past midnight and sat down on the couch, grabbing her Bible off the coffee table, she remembers praying something like:
"God, I know I'm not supposed to open and claim a random promise from your Word. So, if you're trying to tell me something, you better make it clear. I'm going to open this Book, and I need help. What are you wanting me to hear?"

The Book opened to Job 38. "Where were you...?" God asked.

"Where were you...when I?"

Jacque read and lingered... in fear and hope that turned to trust.

"Are you telling me you planned this before the beginning of time? Are you telling me you've taken care of all the details—and I just need to trust you?"

Husband #2 called the couple that owned the ranch the next day to accept the job.

Jacque finished the school year in the suburbs, driving to their new mobile home on the ranch on weekends and to apply for a new job.

One job offer came for her.

A part time teaching position in a private school. Kindergarten on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings and high school Literature and Composition in the afternoons.

She signed her contract that promised an annual salary of \$12,000. Insurance wasn't a part of the compensation package.

Jacque drove the 13 miles to school to and from the ranch through beautiful, rolling hills. Deer. More deer. Sheep. Baby lambs. Wildflowers. More wildflowers.

Her unique schedule provided time to run on the ranch for hours. She dehydrated as much from

tears as sweat in the summer time hill country heat.

The end of her ranch runs always positioned her beside a fence that bordered the pasture that exotic animals had to now call home. A male elk always seemed to know when Jacque would appear at the corner, making her turn toward the odd home she had not expected either.

It was probably not the friendship Jacque pretended it to be with the elk. Still, her heart pounded as she sprinted on the dirt path, the huge elk's hooves sounding like drums as he ran next to her just on the other side of the fence.

Invigorating isn't the right word.

Transformative. Detoxing. Inspirational.

The days at school were like none Jacque had ever experienced inside the four walls of a classroom. She hadn't unpacked one thing from the 42 boxes that were her souvenirs from 20 years in other atmospheres.

She didn't hand out one sticker. She provided hours of feedback, and never put a number grade on any assignment. Report cards were called "Reports of Growth"—and took longer to complete than averaging grades ever did.

Her classroom didn't include anything plastic. There wasn't a laminating machine either. And no copy machine. No worksheets.

The walls were painted a pale, golden yellow called "Claire de Lune."

Real maps and real art hung in real wooden frames. Students' water colored nature specimens bound in treasured nature study journals sat confidently on wooden display shelves. Jacque painted in one of those journals, too.

Real music from classic composers drifted continuously in the air—the same air that used to smell like uneasiness for Jacque.

The literature books she read with the high school students were real books with beautiful language and inspirational ideas. Never once did any one ask, "Will this be on the test?"

Even at night, when silence wanted to rob Jacque of all joy, she transcribed from these books. Words of life. Ideas from a divine source. Living water.

She painted, too. She picked wild blackberries in the morning and made real cobbler in the afternoon.

She nursed a brand-new baby antelope who's breathe smelled as sweet as heaven. She offered this new life goat milk held in the tiniest bottle and let it sleep in a playpen in the guest room that was in the front half of their mobile home.

An injured fawn spent one night in a sleeping bag in the living room.

Husband #2 quit his job on the ranch. Actually, he quit his job on the second ranch, too. "If I do this, I'll get joy," just didn't seem to be working for him.

He moved back to the suburbs to live with his brother. Jacque moved to an old and initially ugly in the ways it hadn't been cared for home, just a block off Main Street.

Caring for the home with friends helped find the beautiful there. It was the first place she'd ever lived with Jesus all by herself. The long sheer white curtains on the wooden windows blew with the hill country air and moved as softly as her heartbeat now.

What she couldn't put words to for a while, Jacque later realized was this: she let God love her first with beauty.

Unearned. Messy. Doesn't make any sense. Doesn't look right to anyone. Nothing fake about it. Inspirational. Love.

What Jacque was receiving, she was becoming. Alive. Beautiful. Real.

Jacque met John.

They'd both been married twice already.

Both of their first marriages lasted 20 years; both of their 2nd marriages lasted 10. They weren't looking for a new relationship when they met each other. They were scared to try again. They knew what didn't work... that's all.

They met before either of them knew about the original good news of a new nature gospel, instead of just "a ticket to heaven, now you better be really good to prove your gratefulness" salvation story.

And so, they tiptoed onto what seemed like a frozen lake that might be hope and might cave in if they weren't very intentional.

They just knew this: Don't do what we did before.

That meant a lot of things. "Just don't count" was a strategic anchor from the beginning. "Just don't count" meant (they didn't know this then either: they just knew keeping score just plain sucked in their previous relationships). "Don't ever say "I'll do this, if you'll do that," even in our minds."

It meant don't keep a list of all I'm doing and don't keep a list of all he or she's doing or that I want him or her to do and don't keep a list of what he or she's not doing.

"Just don't count."

And so, they were just kind to each other. They cooked dinner for each other.

They read books (neither Jacque nor John cared much for TV.) They shared what they were reading and talked about the ideas and the stories they were reminded of.

It was a way of getting to know the life each of them had lived before now.

And they cheered for the Astros together a lot.

They painted the walls in their home "Clair de Lune."

There were other things, too. And one day, maybe five years after they'd been married, they knew. Their relationship hadn't started out as a "transaction" based "I do and I get" relationship.

For the first time since enjoying Jesus alone in the hill country, Jacque had stopped working for love.

Jacque and John's relationship started out as an "I receive and I become" relationship. And oh! The real and sacred transformation.

The love Jacque received from John—unearned, undeserved, out of whack on a balance sheet—changed her.

She needed a lot of healing and needed to grow up in many ways. She still does and she is.

John breathes deeply now the air of transformation, too. He looks as different from how he looked when they first met, as a caterpillar from a butterfly.

Jacque and John's relationship isn't perfect. Life is still hard in many ways.

And it is a safe hard.

Vulnerability is a safe place to be real. And sometimes that's all we need.

Not a fix. Not a medal. Not a prize for doing what the other had on their list.

No, a safe place to receive the love we are created to need like the air we breathe, so we can become the lovers God created us to be, because we are created in His image.

Trust God. Love one another.

There is great hope.



Watch Stage 10, Module 3 discussion video

What are we breathing in? What are we offering our children? Are we breathing in and offering an inspiration life—or a sensational life? Listen as Leah and I discuss to great potential of living a divinely inspired life—and the life-giving, strength building benefits. Record your thoughts on our considerations and questions page.



Download: A Life of Inspiration

This resource reminds us of the power of our relationships, habits, and the ideas we're believing to be true—for good! Find practical course correction for changing one habit at a time—and suggestions for living each day with the gift of inspiration. By the way, have you read Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451*? This book is a great reminder of the impact and influence of a sensational life—as opposed to an inspiration life. This is a book suggestion for your high school students—and you!



Watch Stage 10, Module 4 video

Integrity is wholeness. A life of integrity is clearly directed—and deeply satisfying. Many powerful influences are determined to direct your child's behavior—and form their character. You can help your child build a navigational system for life that is stabilized in truth. This video helps equip you, as parents, to help your child build a life of integrity.



Read this selection from *Prodigal Toddlers, Teenagers, and Parents... Welcome Home*

Have you begun to notice you're living from your shame story instead of from your love story? Teaching our children to recognize the choices they make when living in a shame story is vital. In this reading selection, look for the five steps we can offer our children (and each other) when we notice they've "run away from home" and are living in shame, instead of love.

The first Father's Day gift I ever gave Doug was a significantly large canvas print of Rembrandt's "Return of the Prodigal Son." He cried; he doesn't cry very often.

Henri Nouwen's book by the same title had become a treasured journey for both of us in our new relationship. Henri has a gift for holding our hands and welcoming us home. Doug and I were both on our journey "home."

Home is where we're always:

- welcome.
- known.
- safe.

- loved.

Home is where we always belong.

And running away happens hundreds of times a day—even inside the walls of all of our homes.

Running away happens every time we don't feel:

- welcome.
- known.
- safe.
- loved.

Running away happens when we feel like we don't belong.

Right now is a good time to wonder ...wait a minute, I thought the prodigal son ran away because he was a selfish rebel? He chose to leave! The story doesn't tell us his dad had done anything to make him feel unloved or unwelcome.

Yes. The prodigal son chose to run away. And I bet it wasn't the first time. Especially living with his elder brother; we might call him, the "Pharisee."

I imagine those two boys didn't get along very well, way before the running away part of the story we know. I bet they argued a great deal because I bet they triggered each other in HUGE ways. One of them often wearing "the good boy" mask, and one of them often dressed as "the black sheep of the family." The arguments had to be painful.

If we look closely at the story, **the "Pharisee" had run away long before his brother** grabbed his own part of the inheritance and left town. How do we know?

Because he wasn't experiencing the love of his father living under the same roof.

He wasn't experiencing his father's love, perhaps because in his own mind, he was "good" all on his own. Any needs or struggles he had, he hid, not wanting to put a dent in his perfect record. His motto was "earn and deserve." And he was good at it.

Denying his own needs and hiding his struggles was his way of running away.

Just like his brother.

When we hide from our needs and struggles, we hide from love, too.

It happens every day in us—and in our children.

Our shame stories get triggered and we run. We run to our room. We run to a screen. We run to work, or to work out. We run to the mall. We run to the pantry. We run at each other with fists full of blame.

Our children's shame stories get triggered and they run, too. They run to their room. They run to a screen. They run to get a toy they can throw. They run to the file marked, "Unacceptable Language." They run to the file full of, "Insults & Rude Remarks."

We may run to find our "Victim" mask. We may run to grab our "Shame Thrower."

When our own "good enough" masks don't work and when the anger meter goes off while we're wearing the "black sheep" costume, we all run.

As a parent, what can we learn from the Father?

Can we offer our children a way Home, so they can come out of hiding and experience our love?

Yes. This is the hope for our families. And we can **offer this unconditional love to our children**. But only if we have returned Home—to our Father—ourselves.

I can't extinguish your shame story, if it has ignited mine. If your behavior triggers me, I've forgotten who I am. I've forgotten "I am the beloved" and your behavior has invited me to run.

As a parent, we can give our children a valuable inheritance when we give them a true identity. We can't give them what we don't have.

When my child's behavior triggers my shame story, I am trusting their "goodness" to establish my well-being. I know this is true because their "badness" is disrupting my well-being.

Trusting my true identity as a child of God, Christ's goodness establishes my well-being; His presence in me offers me a new story in place of my shame story. His strength in me offers me new ways of responding.

What would it look like to live out of this new story when my child is "running away?"

A few (or a combination) of these ideas can be helpful:

- **I start from a place of personal peace.** Nothing is on trial here. I may be the brunt and it is already messy, but it's really not about me. I know who I am and my shame story is not a part of this mess.
- I offer to serve, not just get past him, or demean her. This may be as simple as coming closer instead of walking away—or sending him/her away. "**I'm with you.**" "**I'm for you.**"
- I validate. This doesn't mean I agree with what my child is saying or how he's behaving. But I offer this: "**It's ok for you to not be ok.**" "What you're feeling is ok." "It's ok for you to be hurting." "It's ok for this to not be resolved yet."
- **I affirm.** "If I had to do this all over again, I'd still pick you for my oldest son... I'd pick you all over again for my baby girl... You're an incredible gift to this family."
- **I give a way Home.** I change the subject. I take "that" off, so it doesn't feel like her identity or his label, so it doesn't feel like mom or dad thinks she's anything but a delight and wants to be with her, so it doesn't feel like mom or dad thinks he's anything by a treasure and wants to be with him. "Let's go walk the dog." "Let's go play catch." "Let's go make dinner." "I want to

hear that song you've been learning." "Show me those dance moves, again." "Let's go shoot some hoops."

It costs time. It's messy. It may be a beautiful journey to read those ideas again, and see Father God as our own real parent, and see ourselves as the struggling child.

It's love. And True Identity. **"You're not a mess."**

"You're welcome here."

"The real you—not your shame story—is known here."

"You're safe here."

"You're loved here."

"You belong here."

And love is always unearned. The prodigal son came home, prepared to be a servant, to work to earn what he so desperately needed.

The Father says, "All I have is yours; you're my child."

Oh, we struggle with all of this. We confuse grace with enabling or coddling. We want to earn it or deserve it.

I bet no one ever said, "Grace is enabling" or "Grace is coddling" to Jesus on the cross. **I bet no one ever said, "I can do that by myself" about His death and resurrection.**

Grace is identity—a new nature and a new shame—free story. As parents, we get to remind our children who they really are and welcome them home, daily, to their shame-free story.

How will we know when it's having its effect? **"Behavior is the echo of belief."** (Graham Cooke)

If behavior modification worked, the cross of Christ was a waste. **It's our beliefs we must wrestle with and modify;** the ripples of change will be evident in our own behavior and in our children's behavior.

What are our children believing about their identities? Look at their behavior and then help them remember who they really are.

True Identity. Welcome Home... **where nothing's fixed, and everything's changed.**



Read the blog post “I Made a Mistake”

You can find a link to this blog post in the Stage 10, Module 4 page of the Academy website.



Watch Stage 10, Module 4 discussion video

This video is a conversation with Leah about helping our children build a personal GPS system of integrity. We've discovered—in this signature course—that love is stronger than law. Listen to this video to find a place to begin to practically lead our children in loving and life-giving ways.



Read: Life of Integrity eBook

Life can get tangled. We do what we don't want to do, and don't do what we really desire to do. We can experience a life of integrity; this 10-page e-book tells us how. The freedom of new life is ours when we allow our identity, integrity, and the immune system that is our life lived in trusted relationships to line up in love. There is great hope.



CONCLUSION

Please hear this, friends: I'm proud of you. This is a bold journey—and you're taking brave steps... one at a time. I'm eager to hear from you. Please send me an email at janet@john15academy.com. Or if you're an Academy Leader, write a post in the Facebook group. You can also schedule an online consulting appointment. Let us know what you're celebrating in your journey. Let us know your questions about continuing on in your journey, how we can partner with you, and how you may want to partner with us. And remember, THERE IS GREAT HOPE!



Watch the conclusion video