

# INTENTIONAL PARENTING

— 10 WAYS TO BE AN —  
EXCEPTIONAL PARENT  
IN A **QUICK FIX** WORLD



DOUG & CATHY FIELDS

E-BOOK



Intentional Parenting: 10 Ways to Be an Exceptional Parent in a Quick-Fix World

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# **ACTION 1**

## **STRONG BELIEF**

## ACTION 1 **STRONG BELIEF**



*Intentional Parents* believe they have incredible influence on their children.

Brace yourself: you're about to begin a journey that could change the way you parent and redirect the course of your child's life. Are you thinking, "Wow, That's a bold statement!?" We know it is, but we don't say it out of arrogance. Rather, we have confidence that comes from our own parenting journey that has been filled with failures and setbacks, but also victories and a lot of fun. Based on our personal experiences and our work with thousands of families, we have strong convictions about these parenting principles we're going to share with you. We believe they will help you, and, just as importantly, we believe they're doable.

The first essential action in becoming an Intentional Parent is strong belief. You must believe that you are the most significant influence in the life of your child. Parents who don't believe this truth minimize the incredible responsibility God has given them.

In our parenting seminars we are often asked questions that reveal parents' fears about the negative influence of media, culture, and peers on their children. This is a normal concern in today's crazy culture, but we answer their worry by telling them to be less concerned about "outside" influences and more concerned about their hugely significant roles as the primary influencers in their child's lives.

Believe it or not, more than anyone else, kids of all ages are influenced and shaped by their parents' actions, beliefs, and values. This influence only shifts away from parents to other influences when the parents are either physically or emotionally absent. If moms and dads step out of the parenting scene, culture and all it represents is willing and glad to step in.



## YOUR ROLE MATTERS

Your influence is why you are such a big deal as a parent! This should be no surprise since children are very valuable to God.

Look how Jesus describes children:

*He [Jesus] took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.” Mark 9:36-37 (NIV)*

When you welcome a child into your life, you welcome Jesus. That's a powerful! Children are valued by God. You were called to be a parent — it's a significant part of your destiny and life purpose. Becoming an Intentional Parent will be one of the most important actions you ever take.

Here's what the writer of Psalms says:

*“Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from him...” Psalms 127:3 (NLT)*

God has rewarded you with the gift of a child — a gift worthy of cherishing and one that requires your very best effort.

Your first step is to simply believe you are vital to the health and development of your child. Your parenting matters — your child's future is on the line.

# ACTIVITY:

## YOUR ROLE MATTERS



Let's pause and consider how your parenting might be different if you really believed you were the most significant person in the life of your child. Next to the phrases below, circle the number that best describes your current belief.

NOT BUYING IT	HAVE SERIOUS DOUBTS	COULD BELIEVE IT	STRONGLY BELIEVE
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Without a doubt, I'm the strongest influence in my child's life.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

My child is a gift from God especially for me.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

One of the most spiritual actions I can take is to be intentional in my parenting.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

My parenting efforts are worth my very best energy.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Even if I have struggled as a parent, I can still have significant influence on my child.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Which of the statements above is the most difficult for you to believe? Why do you think that is?

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Is there anything keeping you from believing that you are the most significant person in your child's life? If so, what?

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Does Strong Belief feel more like a burden, or does it feel more hopeful? Explain.

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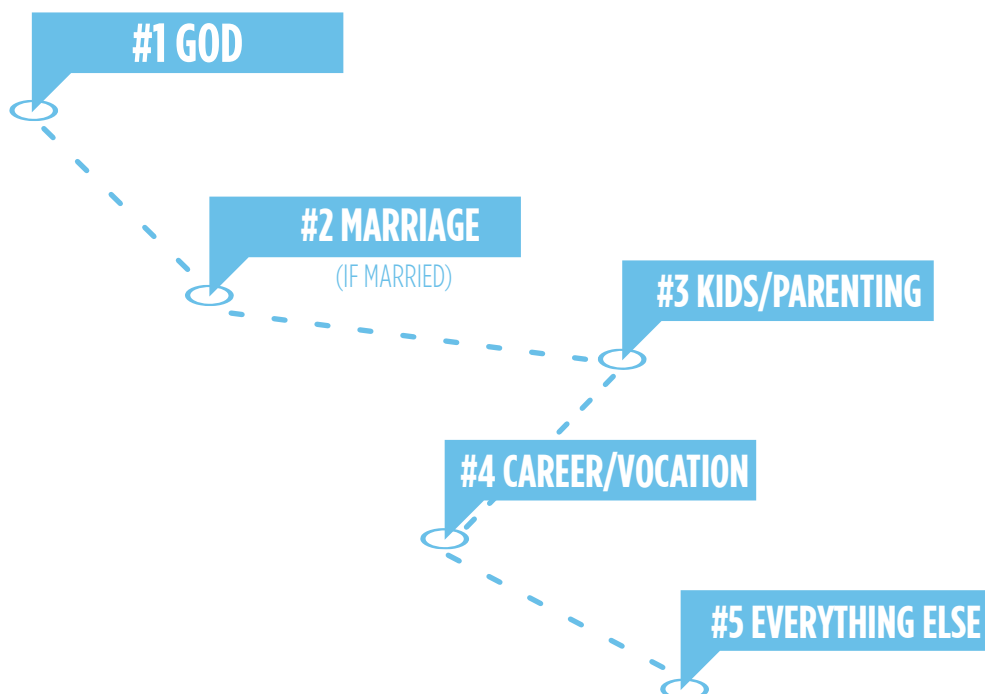


## PARENTING AS A PRIORITY

Most parents have a basic understanding that their parenting roles are important, albeit many are insecure about how to be good parents. Strong Belief is the foundation for everything else in this series, and our hope is that you'll release any guilt you may have about the past. We want to challenge you to develop a deep conviction that your role is crucial, and over time your intentional actions will reap powerful rewards.

You must strongly believe that you are the most influential person in your child's life and take responsibility for it. This belief combined with the specific actions from this series will change the way you parent. Belief is big... but turning belief into action is even bigger.

The ten actions we're going to look at in this series will require you to prioritize your lifestyle and schedule to reflect Strong Belief in your parenting role. Intentional Parents are clear about these priorities, and in this order:



# ACTIVITY:

## PARENTING AS PRIORITY



Do you agree with the order of these priorities? If not, what do you think should be different?

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How would you currently evaluate your life in these specific areas? Think about what gets most of your time and attention, and then rank the following numerically.

- \_\_\_\_\_ A personal, growing relationship with God
- \_\_\_\_\_ Marriage (if married)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Kids/Parenting
- \_\_\_\_\_ Career/Vocation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Friends
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sports/Hobbies
- \_\_\_\_\_ Church Involvement/activities
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other: (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Are you happy with where you ranked parenting in the list above? If not, what changes may you need to make in order to reprioritize?

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## EXPERTS SPEAK

Research and social science studies support the fact that the parent/child relationship significantly impacts a child throughout his or her lifetime. The parent's role and involvement is essential to the child's development of emotional health, academic advancement, and making significant life decisions.

*"... parenting goes far beyond the requirements for meeting the basic survival needs of the child, and parents have a significant influence on how children turn out, including their personality, emotional development, and behavioral habits, as well as a host of other factors. It is important for the overall development of children that parents be present enough to support them, and this support fosters confidence and growth in many areas."*<sup>1</sup>

*"... a lack of parental involvement can have long-lasting negative effects on a child. Children who don't have a close relationship with a parent are at risk for teen pregnancy, more likely to drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes, and more likely to live a sedentary life. They are also more likely to be withdrawn or suffer from depression."*<sup>2</sup>



*"...the parent/child relationship significantly impacts a child throughout his/her lifetime."*

1. Alexandra Murphy, Parental Influence on the Emotional Development of Children  
<https://my.vanderbilt.edu/developmentalpsychologyblog/2014/05/parental-influence-on-the-emotional-development-of-children/>

2. Alice Drinkworth, Positive & Negative Influences of Parents on Their Children  
<http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/positive-negative-influences-parents-children-6070.html>

**ACTIVITY:**  
EXPERTS SPEAK



What, if anything, from these two quotes was empowering to you? Why?

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Did anything strike you as unsettling? Why?

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Think of your own childhood and the example that was set for you. How involved and intentional were your parents?

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What are some positive actions you learned from your parents?

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What negative actions do you want to do differently than your parents?

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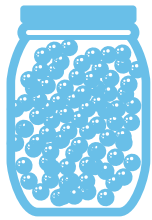
## BEGINNING WITH THE END IN MIND

One way to strengthen your belief is by starting with the end in mind. Your child's 18th birthday marks the first 6,570 days of his life ... which is 936 weeks ... or 216 months.

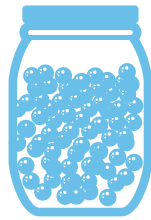
We have a good friend who presents new parents with a decorative jar containing 936 marbles. Every week parents are to remove a marble in order to be reminded of how quickly the gift of time disappears. Since parents are going to "lose their marbles" anyway, this visual aid serves as a prompt for them to be intentional with their remaining time.



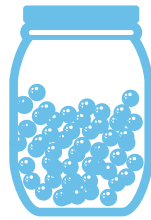
## LOSING YOUR MARBLES



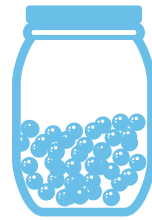
**BIRTH**



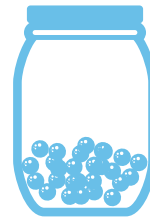
**PRE-K**



**2<sup>ND</sup> GRADE**



**6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**



**FRESHMAN**



**SENIOR**



**GRADUATION**

Let's do a little math. List your kids' names below and write out how many months, weeks, and days (at least approximate) are left before each child turns 18.

Name:

Months

Weeks

Days

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# ACTIVITY:

## BEGINNING WITH THE END IN MIND



When you look at the time remaining until your children turn 18, how do you feel?

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What specific fears do you have?

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No caring parents are just biding their time until their children leave home. All of us have dreams for our kids. We passionately want them to become a certain type of person — one that’s prepared and well equipped to succeed in life. Take a few minutes to think about what kind of qualities you want your kids to possess when they graduate high school and prepare to live on their own. Write down as many ideas as come to mind.

[Note: Keep in mind, we’re not pushing for specific right or wrong answers here; instead, we’re asking you to dream with an end in mind. Wisdom would teach us that he or she who aims at nothing will reach it every time.]

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When you have the end in mind, not only can you be more intentional about how to guide your children, but your belief and resolve will also be strengthened along the way as you focus in and fight for that big picture.

Here is an example of five end-in-mind targets we defined that have helped aim us in the right direction. We wanted our children...

- 1. To Display Confidence:** we observed so many insecure children who lacked basic self-assurance. Without confidence, kids often become victims or followers of others.
- 2. To Express Character:** we wanted our children to develop a moral foundation and have a solid understanding of what is right and wrong. Character influences decision making.
- 3. To Have Strong Convictions:** character without a set of beliefs or convictions is empty. Our dream was for our kids' convictions to be based on the teachings of God's Word. We wanted to introduce them to the person and power of Jesus and pray that their faith would become their own.
- 4. To Show Compassion:** this is closely connected to character and convictions, but we chose to give it its own theme. We wanted to make sure our kids understood that our world is filled with pain and suffering everywhere, and the Jesus they follow requires them to care.
- 5. To Become Competent:** ultimately, at the end of their time with us, we wanted our children to possess certain skills that would serve them well (i.e. people-skills, work-ethic, ability to navigate finances, relational/emotional intelligence, and so on.).

# ACTIVITY:

## BEGINNING WITH THE END IN MIND



Now you try. Look at your list on page 21 and try to bundle them into themes of your own. Notice our five qualities are based on inner values and not outer performance (i.e. grades, athletics, popularity, etc.). We're not suggesting you copy our five themes; rather use them as an example to help deepen your thinking about your own end game.

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If it's helpful, use this chart below.

OUR THEMES:	YOUR THEMES:
CONFIDENCE	
CHARACTER	
CONVICTIONS	
COMPASSION	
COMPETENCE	

Final step. Take some time to turn your themes into phrases that you'll remember, i.e. (To Display Confidence, To Express Character, etc.)

Write your final list here:

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Great job! Now you have some goals and a more defined and clear destination. We encourage you to seek out feedback about what you listed from parents, grandparents, and friends. Consider this a “work in progress,” and continue to reflect on and refine your list until you sense a firm conviction.



## TAKE ACTION

What is one action you might take this week to strengthen your belief as a parent?

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Is there anything that needs to change in order for you to commit to being an Intentional Parent? If so, what?

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Write out a short purpose statement to become a guide to your parenting. It does not have to be a final draft, just list a few words you can easily remember (i.e. “No quick fixes.” “Every day matters.” “Keep the end in mind.”)

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You are on the path to becoming an Intentional Parent. It won't always be easy, but if you keep the end in mind and ask God to guide you along the way, you are on your way to having a huge, positive impact on the life of your child. Believe it!



**LIKE WHAT YOU'VE READ SO FAR?**

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