

# Preface

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How critical is it to provide your children with a worldview that gives them a framework to understand your instruction and discipline? You may be surprised that this book is titled *Instructing a Child's Heart*. You may ask, "Why not title the book *Instructing a Child's Mind*? Isn't instruction directed to the mind?"

## The Importance of the Heart

We often think of the mind as the reasoning aspect and the heart as the emotional part of a person. The Bible does not support that idea. The Bible links thought to the heart. When God sent the Great Flood it was because "every inclination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil all the time" (Gen. 6:5). Mary, the mother of Jesus, finding herself overwhelmed with all she had heard concerning her son, "treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Lk. 2:19). The power of the word of God is seen in the way "it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

The Bible ascribes reasoning and thinking to the heart because the heart is the center of one's being. The heart is where we think, grieve, rejoice, love, hate, desire, fear, pray, and so forth. "The heart is the wellspring of life" (Prov. 4:23).

## The Importance of Instruction

Instructing a child's heart is not simply transferring data from parent to child. It is impressing the heart with truth. Solomon gives this kind of instruction when he says, "My son, if your heart is wise, then

my heart will be glad; my inmost being will rejoice when your lips speak what is right. Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD. There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off. Listen, my son, and be wise, and keep your heart on the right path” (Prov. 23:15–19). Solomon appeals to his son’s heart.

## Expectations of a Child Rearing Book

Moms and dads are looking for tips and ideas that have immediate application to their children. Parents have a “top ten” list of problems they would like to know how to solve. Parents want practical help, “Just tell me what to do when. . . , or tell me what to say when . . .”

You need more than tips and ideas; you need solid biblical truth. Even if we could script conversations and put well-chosen words into your mouth, it would not meet your needs. You would quickly get beyond our script and run out of words. Each interaction within a family has its own unique set of circumstances and personalities. Because God has made human beings and their world complex, there aren’t simple formulas that can be applied to our parenting. If all you have are tips and strategies, you will get beyond your fund of knowledge. Your greatest need is to understand deep truths from the Bible. Solid parenting skills are built on solid truth.

## Organization of the Book

We have organized this book into three major sections. The first looks at the call to formative instruction. This portion looks at formative instruction with a wide lens. In the second section we zero in on more specific topics. The truths discussed in this section must be the substance of formative instruction for your child. It will include chapters on the importance of the heart, sowing and reaping, God’s plan for authority, the glory of God, wisdom and foolishness, how we are complete in Christ and the importance of the church. This is lifesaving formative instruction.

The third section focuses on the application of formative instruction. Practical “how to” instruction for correction, discipline and motivation will help make the connection between formative instruction and corrective discipline. This section will include chapters on

subjects such as consequences, getting from behavior to the heart and communication basics for corrective discipline. All corrective interventions must focus on the good news of the gospel. We want our children to see the forgiving, transforming, empowering grace of Jesus Christ in the gospel.

Instructing a child's heart is essential to shepherding a child's heart. The instruction that you provide not only informs the mind; it is directed to persuading the heart of the wisdom and truthfulness of God's ways. We should impress truth on the hearts of our children, not to control or manage them, but to point them to the greatest joy and happiness that they can experience—delighting in God and the goodness of his ways.

Margy and Tedd Tripp  
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