

DEVELOPING RULES & CONSEQUENCES

A WORKBOOK BY MARK GREGSTON



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How To Use This Workbook

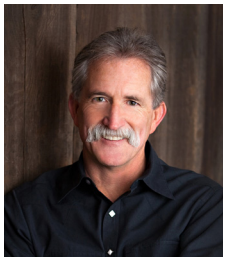
This workbook is presented in an easy format, however implementing the changes contained within requires quite a bit of thought, discussion and determination.

You are embarking on a process of change. Following the steps in this workbook will help you create an environment for change in your home where everyone will understand what is expected of them, as well as their role in fulfilling those expectations.

Each section of the workbook ends with an application exercise. There is space to write your thoughts and ideas as you begin the process of developing a system of rules and consequences based on your beliefs. Please write in pencil so that you can erase, re-write, erase, and re-write.

The back cover of this workbook is the actual template for your Belief System. Please utilize this fold-out as directed throughout the workbook.

A Word from Mark Gregston



Have you ever looked at the way your family operates or how your household runs and wish that things were different? Most parents, when faced with the startling need for change, hardly recall how things got this far out of hand, much less how to begin to make things different within their home. This workbook will give any parent the tools to implement change, and stop the chaos in their home.

Throughout many years of working with families and helping them receive direction for change, I've learned that a little bit of structure goes a long way. Practicing just a few basic discipline principles can forge quite a change in the life of a family. However, handing down rules for the sake of having rules alone, is never a good idea.

I encourage you to be particular in what you want to see change, set some boundaries, and put into play a system of rules and consequences that are based upon your beliefs. These beliefs are the foundation upon which relationships are built within your home.

I also encourage you to develop a structure within your family that persuades each person to assume responsibility for their actions and helps them to make good choices. If you set the stage with rules and consequences, your teen will know the boundaries in which to operate, and be moved to a place where they want to be, and kept from the place they don't want to go.

I think you'll find that, at the very least, implementing just a few ideas in this workbook will bring great results. Ask questions, search your heart, and don't be afraid to identify ways to honor the beliefs you hold dear.

Every child wants structure and desires to know their boundaries. They want to take control of their lives by knowing what's required of them. I pray that in developing your own Belief System for Discipline, you can implement change and avoid chaos in your home. Lord Bless!

Mark Gregston

Identify What Needs to Change

You may have picked up this workbook out of mere curiosity, frustrated desperation, or somewhere in between. That's good! I believe every family needs to carefully consider how to manage discipline in their home, in order to move in a more positive direction as their children enter the teen years.

What is a belief system for discipline? Why do you need to think about implementing one in your home? It's been said that rules without a relationship cause rebellion, and I firmly believe this. But I also believe that relationships without rules cause chaos. You may feel so overwhelmed by the chaos in your home that you can't even think of where to begin. You want to have a more peaceful home, but often feel clueless as to how to get it. Like every good parent, you just want to be prepared to train your child properly as the teen years approach.

It's easy to think that if you just sit back and let things happen in your family, you will still end up in a great place. More often than not, families end up at war with the culture as it invades their lives through many avenues of influence. Without the necessary tools or discipline strategy, it's impossible to uphold their beliefs. As a result, teens are unprepared for adulthood, and parents feel helpless to intervene when their teen experiences a struggle or spins out of control.

When kids are younger, parents are in charge, so discipline isn't an issue we give much more attention to. But when discipline becomes a problem during the teen years, it garners your full attention, and rightly so. After all, if you don't pay attention to the character qualities you would like to see develop in your child, they won't develop. If you ignore the behavior issues and hope things will get better on their own, they won't. If you disengage at a time in your teen's life when they need you, you will lose the opportunity to speak truth into their life altogether.

Let me encourage you, there is still time. The place to start is at the very beginning. That means identifying what you believe needs to change, and then implementing those changes in a meaningful way.

WHAT BOTHERS YOU THE MOST?

As you think about what needs to change, begin by asking yourself some questions. What frustrates or bothers you the most about the way things are at home? Are your kids out of control in some areas? Is respect lacking? Is your house a war-zone? Would you like to spend less time being a taxi-driver, and more time together as a family? Should you set a curfew for your teen? How much freedom should you allow? How will you reward your child for responding correctly to a situation? Who pays for cell phone, insurance, gas?

There are many areas to consider when thinking about what you would like to be different in your home. Some are obvious, and some may take a little more thought. The list to the right may help spur your thinking.

What will you provide? What will you not provide? What will your kids need to pay for all on their own? Privileges, curfews, dating, what kind of music they listen to, where they go, how and where they are entertained…all of these can be considered as areas that need to change if you are unhappy with the way they are right now.

The tendency of today's teen is to expect you to give them everything. They want it all and don't understand what it takes to pay for it. Does that bother you? If you fail to provide boundaries and rules, they will continue to assume that you will give them everything. Allowing them to continue in their immature presumptions will bring nothing but strife.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THINGS DON'T CHANGE?

The goal of discipline is to prepare your child for adulthood by bringing him from childish or foolish thinking to responsible thinking and mature behavior. Hopefully you're moving your child from total dependency at birth to independence at the end of their adolescence. Ask yourself, "If things don't change, if I allow whatever is happening to keep happening, where will they end up as adults? Better? Worse?" If the answer is "Worse," you need to act to correct things now, because the problem will only continue to grow.

Academics
Holidays & Traditions
Family Vacations
Jobs
Sleep
Household Chores
Spiritual Training
Honesty & Integrity
Obedience
Respect
Video Game Boundaries
Sharing
Money
Curfews
Modesty
Friends & Dating
Drugs & Alcohol
Church
Volunteer Work
Freedoms
Who Pays for What
Activities Outside of Home
Future Education
Cleanliness
Clothing & Appearance
Diet & Exercise
Medical Issues
Extended Family Relationships

By identifying specific areas for change, you can consider what you truly believe should happen. Your belief system for discipline will help you get there.

- Everyone will know your boundaries.
- Your child will know what is okay, and what is not and the consequences that result.
- Discipline becomes targeted, not pointless or aimless.
- You will say, "No," when you need to, and your children will honor it.
- The entire family has input into the strategy.
- Discipline remains consistent for every family member.
- Your beliefs are honored and may even be adapted into your child's own life.
- There is peace instead of chaos in your home.

Application

Welcome to the process of implementing change and avoiding chaos in your home. Begin by making a list of ten important areas in your home that need to change. Then, address areas you'd like to be more prepared to handle, and write them down as well.

AREAS I'D LIKE TO SEE CHANGE:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

AREAS I'D LIKE TO PREPARE FOR:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Offering **help** and **hope** to parents and teens in a broken world.

No matter the issues, you are not alone. Whether you feel like all hope is lost or simply need encouragement and guidance, you should know one thing—help is not far. **To learn more visit heartlightministries.org**

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Sharing A Story

Our son was a month away from high school graduation when Jan and I went away for the weekend. When we returned from our travel, I knew the moment I entered our home that a crowd of people had been there, against our instructions to our son for what was to happen - or not happen - while we were gone. When I questioned my son about the weekend, he kept telling me nothing happened, he followed everything that we requested, and the weekend was just a normal weekend. I sensed something otherwise. I felt like Papa Bear coming home to find that more than one Goldilocks had roamed through the house - eating our porridge, sleeping in our bed, and breaking our furniture. I felt it because it happened. As a matter of fact, there were about 40 Goldilocks that ravaged our home that weekend. They played in the whirlpool and left it a mess. They ate all our food. They tracked dirt and mud throughout the house. They broke my stereo system. They played with our computers. They drank and smoked cigars. Drawers were searched through, privacy was violated, and disregard for our desires for our home were trashed.

The major issue for me wasn't that a group of kids got together to have some fun somewhere. The big deal for me was my belongings were missing, and my son allowed strangers to violate or completely ignore what I had said. People I didn't know invaded my privacy, intruded on my personal space, and stole from me. My boundaries were violated. The matter was further complicated by my son's deceit, lying, and cover-up. I realized that if I didn't want the same thing to happen again, then the personal boundaries set by my wife and me needed to be stronger.

Establish Your Boundaries

EXACTLY WHAT ARE BOUNDARIES? The story should give you an idea of what a boundary is. Jan and I established tighter boundaries after that incident, and implemented them in order to protect ourselves, keep others from taking advantage of us, and to keep us from being further violated.

> Every person is a child of God, and entitled to be valued, protected, and honored by those around them. Setting boundaries helps communicate that value and honor to others.

Boundaries define you. They are the personal fences you place around yourself, defining what you will become. They are the "I will" and "I will not" statements that are the basis of your choices and interactions with others. Boundaries let your family and others know where you begin, and where you end.

When parents struggle with disciplining their teen, often times it is because there is no basic understanding about boundaries within the family. Often people don't realize the need for a

boundary until it has already been crossed by another's poor decision or behavior. In horse training, if a horse breaks through the fence you've built, then it's the responsibility of the fence-maker to build a stronger fence. The same is true for setting boundaries.

Knowing personal boundaries ensures each family member takes responsibility for their own actions.

As your child enters adolescence, they must understand some very important things about you. By establishing boundaries and communicating those to your family through your actions, requests, words, and lifestyle, you are promoting your value as an individual, and establishing parental authority in the life of your teen.

I encourage you to sit down and spend some reflective time defining yourself. It's important to note not only the areas where your "fences" are broken, but also those areas you would like to build some new "fences."

RULES & BOUNDARIES ARE DIFFERENT.

It might help to keep in mind that boundaries and rules are two different things. Boundaries are about **you**, rules are about managing your **home** and supporting your **beliefs**. A boundary can be intertwined or connected to a rule, but I would encourage you to define some boundaries for yourself before you engage in determining rules for your home.

Here are some examples of boundaries:

- I will be honest to everyone and will share the truth when needed. I will not lie for others. I value hearing the truth from others as well.
- I will not be treated as a maid, a cook, a taxi driver, or an activities coordinator. I will do some of these things, but I will be treated as a mother, a wife, and a respected person in this family.
- I will not yell at you and I expect you to not yell at me.
- I will spend some of my time doing things for myself without feeling guilty.
- I will not be a dumping ground for emotional outbursts. I will talk to you, have discussions, and stand with you during any struggle, but you can't come home and verbally assault me every time you are upset.
- I don't have to "jump" every time you say "frog."
- I won't answer every phone call or reply to every e-mail. I will communicate.
- I will not be disrespected by you or your friends.

- I'm an open person, but there are times when I desire privacy.
- My bedroom is my bedroom. I appreciate a knock on the door before anyone enters.
- I will loan my things to many people. However, there are a number of items that I won't loan out, including my camera, my guitar, my car, and certain tools.
- I will control what is in my car. When I am driving, I am in control of the radio, the air conditioning and the speed of the car. I will offer you the same respect when I am a passenger in your car.
- I need time away from you just as you need time away from me. Your mother and I will go out with friends once a week and you will be responsible for preparing your own dinner.
- I will not do your laundry, make your bed, or clean your bathroom.
- I will attend as many of your activities as I possibly can, but I can't attend all of them.
- Sexually explicit material offends me and I will not allow jokes, pictures, or movies that display such.
- I'm a lover of animals and do not want my animals to be mistreated.
- Our curfew is set to smoothly operate our home, and not just to give you a privilege of staying out with your friends.
- I can't do for you what I wouldn't do for your brothers or sisters.
- I won't pay for everything. I expect you to pay for some things.
- I want to give you everything, but do not owe you anything. (If you will quit demanding everything from me I might offer you more than you want).
- Your friends aren't allowed to come over without my being informed of their visit beforehand.
- I will not bad-mouth your father (or mother) or allow you to do so.

These are just some examples for establishing boundaries. Can you see the power you



embrace when establishing these boundaries for your life? Without them, your value as an individual is lost. Establishing boundaries in your life also gives your child a great example for the need to establish their own boundaries. They need them because, as a child of God, they are entitled to be valued, protected, and honored.

ABOVE ALL: RESPECT.

The cornerstone for any belief system for discipline rests on the issue of respect. Without respect, nothing in your system of discipline will work, regardless of how well it is structured. I remember a song we sang a thousand times in the seventies and eighties, when I led Young Life groups, called, *We Are One in the Spirit.* A verse from this song goes, "We will work with each other, we will work side by side…and we will guard each man's dignity and save each man's pride." **That's respect.**

Boundaries identify what you will and will not do.

Personal boundaries encompass respect. Tell your family that if nothing else, you will have respect in the way you act, speak, and engage with one another at home. Set it as a boundary in your life, and build it into the rules for your family.

Application

Review the areas of your life that you feel violated, missed, disrespected or used. Use the space below to write a one-line statement of how you want your life to change in those arenas. This exercise will help you better know who you are. Ultimately, your boundaries will help you develop rules that will guide your family and home in a direction that reflects your parental goals.

MY BOUNDARIES:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

- Boundaries are about you.
- Boundaries help you learn when to lovingly say “yes” or “no” when someone or something wants your time, energy, money or attention.
- Boundaries usually remain the same throughout life. Rules need to be adjusted as your family matures, in order to be more age-appropriate, or be more clearly defined to address a specific problem.
- Boundaries are not rules. Boundaries are about your character. Rules are about the structure of the managing of time and resources within your home.
- Boundaries address how you respond to others, and how you want others to respond to you.
- Boundaries force you to take responsibility for your choices and empower you to set limits.
- Setting boundaries in your own life gives license for your child to set boundaries in their life.
- Your child wants to know your boundaries; who you are and who you are not.
- Setting your boundaries establishes parental authority in the life of your teen.

How To Implement Change

You've learned that change in your family is needed. You're probably already thinking about these changes, but how do you go about implementing them? This section of the workbook will present a method I've successfully used to implement change in the lives of many families during my forty years of ministry. I am confident it will help you too.

Change is not always easy. The longer something has been a certain way, the more difficult it is to bring about change. As you set the stage for change in your home, or with a certain aspect of your discipline, begin with an assessment: *Do I like what I see right now?* If not, change is necessary. Realizing that things in your life, or the life of your child are not moving in the right direction is the first step in change.

Change doesn't happen quickly. You can't just wake up one morning and expect everything to be different. Changing the discipline structure in your home will take time. You want everyone in the home on board as changes are made, and rallying this support also takes time. When it comes to implementing change it's important to remember that quick fixes won't work.

STEP ONE: SET THE STAGE & ARRANGE A FAMILY MEETING

The best way to begin to implement change in your home is to simply let your family know that you are not happy and leave it at that. When they ask exactly what you mean, don't give them a specific answer. Speaking in generalities will make everyone wonder what exactly you are talking about, and perhaps they will do some of their own thinking on the issue.

The key is to let your family know you want to see things change, without telling them exactly how. You might use words like:

"I am unhappy with the things I see."

"I don't support this."

"This isn't turning out the way I thought it should."

"I'm not comfortable with the way we do this."

Simply voicing your discontent lets everyone know that change is coming. You are setting the stage for your family to expect change. Use a calm approach right from the beginning. This sets the tone for future discussions and meetings to also remain calm. Give your family time to get used to the idea that change is coming, without yet knowing exactly what is going to be different.

Tell your family you'd like to meet at dinner, or some other convenient time. If necessary, let them pick the time and place. You might come to the table dressed differently, or sit in a different spot. Again, this communicates the message that **things are going to change.**

STEP TWO: SHARE YOUR CONCERNS

Always start your family meetings on a positive note. Begin by affirming the good things you see. Then, without being too specific, begin to identify the areas you'd like to change. Tell your family what's bothering you about the way things are right now. For example:

"I'm not happy with how we talk to one another."

"I need to spend more time at home with you."

"Our family seems overwhelmed by our schedule."

"I've made some mistakes with discipline up until now."

As you share your heart with your family, comments might sound like this:

"As a family, I think we're headed in a direction we don't want to go."

"There is something I've done wrong as a parent that I need to change."

"This is where I'd like for us to be, and we're not going to get there headed in the current direction."

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You are letting your family know that change is inevitable. Address the general areas for change and identify your concerns. At this stage, keep your statements less specific:

"I'm concerned about cleanliness around the house."

"We need to think about our crazy schedules."

"I want to see a different amount of respect (honesty, or obedience) with one another."

"I have been considering how to handle curfew."

"I'm not okay with drinking."

"I can't continue to do everything for you."

"I can no longer pay for everything you ask."

This is **not** the meeting for *solving* the problems, you are simply identifying areas that need to change. Don't ask for discussion yet. End this meeting by suggesting that each family member give thought to the ideas presented. Allow everyone time to consider the issues before scheduling the next family meeting.

STEP THREE: MEET TO DISCUSS SPECIFICS

This meeting should be held at a different time of day, or in a different setting than your first meeting. Again, this reinforces the idea that you intend to bring about change, and hope to have your family's cooperation in the process.

Come to this meeting with a list of the specific things you want to handle differently. Share them with your family. This is the first meeting where you ask for their input and invite discussion. **Don't rush this process.**

"I want to talk about your expectations for using the car, going to college, and your future."

"We will not continue to speak disrespectfully to one another."

"Everyone has to clean their own bathrooms from now on."

"There will be a new set of curfews for each age beginning next month."

"I want to see you begin to pay for your own gas and insurance."

Don't address rules or consequences at this meeting. Just listen and discuss everyone's ideas. Stay focused on the areas where change is needed. End the meeting by telling everyone that new rules relating to these areas of concern will be presented at your next gathering.

STEP FOUR: MEET TO PRESENT THE RULES

This meeting will serve to present your family with the new rules. Begin asserting that the rules are not being implemented to condemn or shame anyone. Rather, they are put into place for everyone's benefit to redirect and improve your family's future.

Address the top ten concerns, and creatively find a relevant rule or set of rules to reinforce each one. Invite discussion from family members. You may be surprised to hear your teen give you better rules than you created. Make sure everyone understands they have input in the process of developing rules.

STEP FIVE: MEET TO PRESENT CONSEQUENCES FOR EACH RULE

At a final family meeting, present the consequences that will occur for each rule Remember, consequences can be *positive* (a reward for honoring the rules), or *negative* (loss of privileges). Let everyone know what will happen in advance, so they know what to expect. Make the goal of the meeting to move your family toward consensus. **Even if everyone doesn't agree, make sure they understand the changes in rules are effective immediately.**

STEP SIX: MAKE IT HAPPEN

Remember, implementing change isn't easy. In fact, it's downright intimidating. It takes far longer than you think it should. You may face a lot of opposition at first, and you should probably expect it. **Remain consistent. Be patient. Don't back down.**



A Belief System for Discipline

A Belief System for Discipline is a set of beliefs, boundaries, rules and consequences that govern the discipline in your home, and helps you implement change and avoid chaos.

Developing a system of discipline for your home demands that you reflect, review, and revise what you really believe, and assure it assimilates with scriptural parenting and relationship principles. You may find some of your long-held beliefs need scrutiny to determine their relevance in your current situation. Sometimes beliefs, both right or wrong, are so firmly planted or ingrained on your heart, but they may no longer be pertinent or helpful to your child as he or she enters adolescence. Some examples of these type of beliefs include:

- As long as you don't do anything wrong, you're a good person. If you do something wrong, you're a bad person.
- Smokers and drinkers are going to hell.
- If you just do the right things, then good things will happen.
- If you are a follower of Christ, then you will nothing bad will happen in your life.
- If you make a mistake, you disappoint God.
- If you struggle through problems, then there must be something wrong with you.

As young adults, we are often taught that if you just do everything right, then everything in our lives will turn out right. However: there exists no perfect equation to living. You may truly believe that as long as you do everything right as a parent, your kids will always make good choices. You may believe that a family with devotions will never display difficult family emotions. You may believe your child is not capable of doing wrong. And you may have thought that you would never be divorced, never have a child defy you, and never feel abandoned by people you always thought would be there for you.

My point is this – **beliefs change in response to a greater wisdom gained through learning and life experiences.** As you raise teens, you'll find that just about every belief

you hold dear will be challenged in one way or another. And sometimes changing your beliefs can benefit both you and your child. Consider it an "upgrade" or "revision" to deal with the changes in your life.

For example, I once worked with a family experiencing a great amount of turmoil with their teenage daughter. The father, an intelligent man and medical doctor, sought help from his pastor on how to best discipline his unruly teenager. This pastor firmly believed that to, *"spare the rod is to spoil the child."* His counsel was, *"let her have it and she'll eventually change."*

Many things you think are true, really aren't. The ideals you hold close may not be so ideal. The wisdom you thought you possessed may just be man-made foolishness.

The father became confused when spanking his daughter to the point of drawing blood didn't change her behavior. After months of abusing and damaging his child, this intellectual man came to the proper conclusion that the counsel he received from his pastor was wrong and was making a real mess of his relationship with his daughter. The negative impact rippled out to include the rest of his family. When he realized that his beliefs about this type of discipline were misdirected, *he changed his beliefs about that kind of punishment*. He began to look for truth and a new way of managing his family.

As your child enters the teen years, it's inevitable that your beliefs about discipline will be put to the test. This is a good thing, because it will cause you to reflect and review your beliefs. With some critical thought, you can determine which of your beliefs are right and should remain intact, and which ones need to revision and change.

WHY IS DEVELOPING A BELIEF SYSTEM FOR DISCIPLINE SO IMPORTANT?

When a teenager doesn't know what is expected in your home, he does what *seems* right in his own eyes - and that's a formula for chaos. Part of your teen's developing independence involves the need to exercise free will. This is why parents must take time to establish a clearly defined belief system **before** children enter the adolescent years. With a strong belief system in place, the chaos inherent in raising teens will be lessened. Your teen will be able to make decisions, and face the consequences of those decisions, giving him the opportunity to establish his own belief system. And isn't that the ultimate goal of parenting?

Teens are prone to test their limits in every possible way.

The root of the word discipline is *disciple*. Discipline for your teen is characterized by positive training or discipleship, just as we saw Christ demonstrate with his disciples in scripture. Even if you haven't done an

especially good job of disciplining your child, it's not too late to implement change. **Later is better than never!** Because when your family has a cohesive belief system in place, it helps a teen find security in their highly insecure world.

TWO SETS OF RULES.

Sometimes parents face insurmountable obstacles that come about from divorce or separation. When a child spends time with two sets of parents, often they must live with two different sets of beliefs. This situation can be very difficult and confusing for everyone involved. Whenever possible, parents should attempt to be united under the banner of the same belief system. Obviously, the well-being of their child is the greatly benefited if this can be established.

In less than ideal situations, divorced parents may be divided in their beliefs. One parent may provide no rules or boundaries for the child, while the other is strict in their discipline. Even if a belief system is supported in one home and not the other, it is better than having no belief system at all.

KEEP IT CURRENT & MAKE IT RELEVANT.

A belief system cannot be static. In order to keep your discipline current and relevant to your child's life, you must be willing to update your beliefs, boundaries, rules and consequences as needed. Start your plan before your child becomes a teen and re-evaluate it periodically.



TOUGH GUYS
>>>>> AND <<<<<
DRAMA QUEENS
SEMINAR

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Application

Okay, do this little exercise. Once you have determined what your boundaries will be, begin to think about these two things.

1. What do you want from your teen?

2. What will you do for your teen?

A wise man once said, "You don't get what you want, you get what you negotiate." Basically you've got to determine what you'll give, in hopes of getting what you want. If you're thinking that you shouldn't have to negotiate behavior, you're absolutely right. You shouldn't have to... but sometimes you've got to, to get to a different place than where you currently are. Remember, the goal here is not to flex your authoritarian muscle, but to get your teen to agree to certain behaviors (or refrain from some) so that they can experience something new and different, in hopes that they'll continue to be willing to give up some things for greater gain.

What Do You Want From Your Teen?

If you could be granted five wishes all pertaining to what you'd like to see differently from your teen, what would those requests be? So many times I think that a few small changes will make a big difference in the atmosphere of a home. So in this exercise, I would encourage you to just select five of the main issues in your home, in hopes of changing them.

Would you choose respect? Sobriety? Taking prescribed meds? Treating siblings with kindness? Academic responsibility? Work ethic? Obedience? Honesty? Modesty? Purity? You might choose the absence of certain behaviors such as cutting, drinking, cussing, lying, a display of a contemptuous attitude, or sexual activity. What are your top five things that you want from your teen?

STEP ONE: Determine Your Beliefs

YOU CAN'T ARGUE WITH WHAT SOMEONE BELIEVES. I believe that nothing good happens to a teen that is out of the house after midnight. You can talk until you are blue in the face to try and convince me otherwise, but I won't change my belief.

It's hard to argue with what someone truly believes, isn't it? Once you understand your beliefs, you can build rules for your home based upon those beliefs. In my case, everyone in my home abides by a curfew.

Your teen may argue against your beliefs, but it will be a fruitless exercise. **You can't argue with what someone believes.** You may believe that smoking is bad for your health, so you don't allow it in your home. Your teenager may not hold the same belief, *but it doesn't matter.* This is what YOU believe. Your teenager will decide for himself whether or not to smoke, and suffer the consequences if he chooses to do so.

You begin building your belief system for discipline by identifying what you really believe about the way your home should run. Decide for yourself what is appropriate for your family. What do you believe about education, church attendance, family time, jobs, work, cleanliness, and more? Once you establish these beliefs, you can communicate them to your child.

As mentioned earlier, it's important to keep your belief system current so that it is relevant to your child at any given point in his life. For example, a four year-old child doesn't need a curfew, so don't make it part of your belief system. Pre-teen kids do need curfews, but not as late as older teens, and they may be allowed out only on non-school nights. The point is to keep your belief system appropriate to your child and their current age.

WHERE DO BELIEFS COME FROM?

Traditions. The foundation of your belief system will be you and your spouse, and it will probably be affected by the way you both were raised. Your home may or may not operate exactly the same way as your parents' home did. If you grew up in a difficult home setting, you might change many things about the way your home is run. There may also be elements in your upbringing you *will* incorporate into your home.

For example, if your parents provided a family vacation every year, and it had positive effects, then your belief system will probably include an annual family vacation as an important way for your family to spend time together.

If your parents taught you responsibility by allowing you to work for the things you wanted, you may likewise believe it's best for your children to work to earn things they want. These traditions, or generational beliefs, are ideas that are passed down from grandparent to parent to child. Consider your personal family traditions by asking the following questions *(Feel free to jot down any notes or thoughts as you go through these sections):*

What are your family traditions?

Which traditions are beneficial to the family? Which are not?

What do you believe about holidays?

What do you expect from your teen during family vacations?

Are non-family members allowed to come on family vacations?

How much time should your family spend together every week?

Should your teen be allowed to work while still in school?

How many hours per week should your teen work?

When is bedtime during school, weekends, holidays?

What happens when teens aren't getting enough sleep?

How often do you visit extended family?

What are some ways you parent differently than your parents?

Spiritual Beliefs. Your belief system should be closely tied to your relationship with God. The Bible is our best reference on how to live honorably and in harmony with God and man. It is an excellent resource for establishing God's ideals in your home. Your **spiritual beliefs** will address your child's character traits, spiritual training, and issues like honesty, obedience and respect.

What do you believe about family church attendance?

How often should your child participate at church?

Can your teen choose what they'll do for spiritual training?

What is the appropriate attire for church?

Should your teen participate in mission trips?

How will you teach your child about giving to charity?

Will you pay for any college or Christian college?

Functional Beliefs. Your functional beliefs relate to everyday living. You may believe that bedrooms need to be cleaned on a periodic basis and that each family member must perform certain chores in the home. You may believe that your attendance at your child's sports activities is a good way to encourage and support your child. **These are functional beliefs.** They address the daily habits and quirks unique to each individual in the family. When considering your functional beliefs, take into account the following topics:

- Family Obligations & Requirements
- Household Chores & Duties
- Money & Allowances
- Social Activities & Curfew
- School, Homework & Grades
- Volunteer & Charity Work
- Extracurricular Activities & Sports
- Home School, Private School
- High School and College Education
- Personal Cleanliness
- Diet & Exercise
- Medical Issues
- Extended Family Relationships

Privileges. It is important that your belief system address the privileges allowed your teen. These privileges can include use of the car, cell phone, computer, tools, or electronics. You should have a plan for when these privileges will be implemented or revoked.

- Can your teen stay up later than younger siblings?
- When can they use the computer or play video games?
- When are they allowed to drive the car?
- Can they have a cell phone?
- Are there "no tech" days in your home?
- What tech policies to you have for your home?
- Is your teen allowed to host a party in your home?
- Can your teen use your electronic equipment (cameras/video systems)?

Social Engagements. Within your belief system, you should establish what constitutes appropriate behavior for social engagements. Consider the following questions.

When is your teen allowed to spend time with friends?

When is an adult chaperone required?

Can your teen have friends over when you are not home?

At what age will your child be allowed to date?

What is your stance on overnight outings? Extended trips?

Will your child be allowed social time on the internet?

Morals. You and your spouse will integrate your morals into your belief system. To clearly define your moral standards, ask yourself the following:

What do you believe about honesty & trustworthiness?

What about respect & obedience?

What is your stance on purity?

What about social accountability?

Who defines lawfulness?

What moral expectations do you have of your child?

Which entertainments support your moral beliefs, and which do not?



Application

Identifying your boundaries and determining your beliefs is a time-consuming process, but well worth the investment. As you consider these sources of your beliefs, write down your ten most important beliefs on the worksheets in the back cover. When you understand what you truly believe about how your home should function, you have the basis for moving toward the next step, which is to create and implement rules and consequences.

Sharing A Story

Matt was a young man that violated a rule set up for his benefit. That rule was simple: As long as he was underage, he wasn't allowed to drink alcohol. It was set up to insure that there wasn't going to be a dangerous mixture of alcohol and immaturity that could result in disaster. It was set up to insure his safety and the safety of others, and to protect him from ending up in jail for breaking the law.

But Matt broke the rule and he got drunk. He and some friends saw keys in a car and they decided to steal it. He drove the car and, like many who drink and drive, he didn't follow the speed limit. He rolled the car, and two of his friends died that night. Matt ended up in prison for nine years.

When Matt broke the rule, the effect rippled. His violation of one rule led to disregard for a number of others. Families were devastated and lives were destroyed. By breaking a rule set up protect him, Matt suffered a life-changing, eternal consequence. It changed his life and the lives of many others, and can never be erased.

STEP TWO: Develop Rules

Rules are set up to insure that people get to a place where they want to go, and to not end up in a place where they don't want to go.

Rules are intended to help the person subject to the rules. It is important for your teen to understand that rules are in place for their protection and benefit.

RULES - NOT RULING. Too often rules are established to demonstrate parental authority or control. They are displayed on the refrigerator in order to run the house. Attempts like this miss the real purpose of having rules, and rebellion from your teen often ensues. Instead of establishing rules to control your child, establish rules to give your child the power to make the right decisions and gain control over his own life.

> Rules are expectations and guidelines for behavior that support your family boundaries and beliefs.

Most of us work for companies that have a policy manual. We follow the policies because they are a requirement of our employment and by following them, we receive financial benefits and privileges. The rules allow us to know what to expect, how to act, and how not to act if we want to keep our jobs. Likewise, the rules within your family belief system will help each family member know what is expected of them, how to act, where the lines are drawn between right and wrong behavior, and the consequences for stepping over the line.

How do you go about creating and implementing rules that will effectively guide your teen for their own good, and for the good of your entire family? Here are some guidelines:

RULE 1: RULES ARE FOR YOUR CHILD'S BENEFIT. The ultimate intent of creating and enforcing rules in your home is that of keeping a child's poor choices from consuming him, and destroying his relationships with others. Rules for your home will most likely fall into three main areas of concern, which are foundational to all other character issues. They are **honesty, obedience,** and **respect.**

RULE 2: ASK THE QUESTION. Before establishing a rule, ask yourself if the rule will help build your child's character and cause him to become more mature or responsible. Does this rule push your child toward self-control? If not, then you should rethink the rule and your motivation for making it.

RULE 3: USE COMMON SENSE. Rules need to make sense. We can all think of rules set down by our own parents that made no sense at all. Make sure your rule serves to benefit your child.

RULE 4: KEEP IT RELEVANT. Rules should be relevant, attainable and beneficial, not a source of shame, frustration, or failure. Ask yourself, *"How much will this rule matter after my child is grown or I am no longer in the picture?"*

Rules need to evolve and keep in line with the growing maturity of your teenager. Out-of-date, irrelevant or demeaning rules will lead to animosity, loss of respect, and rebellion. They can also lead to confusion about consequences, since outdated rules are often not enforced. Regularly update your rules and restate them to your teenager, awarding them with freedom and added privileges for the progress they make.

RULE 5: ENFORCE RULES WITH REASONABLE CONSEQUENCES. For teenagers, the loss of a privilege can be a powerful consequence. Sometimes they don't realize how many privileges they enjoy until they lose them for a time.

At one time years ago, we had several teenage boys living with us in our home. Based on the worsening condition of their bathroom, I could see that they needed help with exercising more self-control. So, I told them, *"Guys, from now on you need to clean your own toilet and keep your bathroom clean. If not, you could lose it."*

Unfortunately, they ignored the rule and the mess got even worse. The once pearly white toilet bowl turned horrible shades of brown.

So, one day I just took the entire toilet out! I literally removed it from the house. By that time, the toilet needed to be replaced anyway, and I thought not having it for awhile would be a good learning opportunity.

When they got home from school there was nothing but a little hole in the floor where the brown toilet used to stand, and they said, *"Where are we supposed to go?"*

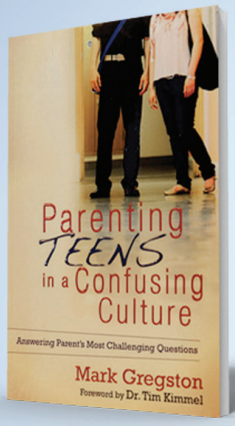
I replied, *"Aim well! I'm sorry, the rule is that you need to clean your toilet and keep your bathroom clean. If you won't clean it, you can't have it."*

After a few days of not aiming too well, and the smell becoming unbearable, they came to me asking me what they needed to do to get the toilet back. I told them they could have the toilet back on the condition that they clean the bathrooms in the whole house for the next several months. They readily agreed, and we installed a new toilet. They cleaned all the bathrooms for a few months, and learned the importance of taking better care of things. **They also learned that when you break a rule, you pay the consequences.**

Setting up rules and enforcing consequences are the best ways to help your child learn right from wrong, and to change from selfish to unselfish thinking.

RULE 6: KEEP RULES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP.

When you put forth rules, make it clear that they are developed in the context of wanting your child to do well in life, and not a selfish way for you to feel better or be the one



Your teen's texts are getting through.

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who is in control. Rules are not just about having your house operate well and getting the chores done. In the toilet example I gave, I saw a major opportunity to teach these boys an important life principle, not just make that side of our house smell better.

Above all, keep in mind that your relationship with your child is more important than any rule. Don't tie rule-keeping or rule-breaking to your love for them, or your acceptance of them. Let them know that you will continue to love them, even when they break a rule. They may need to be reminded: *"There is nothing you can do to make me love you more, and nothing you can do to make me love you less."*

As you think about your beliefs and boundaries, line out the rules for your home, and begin to think about consequences. Decide things like: who pays for what, what time frame is expected for certain things like curfew and chores, what you expect from them for school and grades, work, their spiritual life, their friends. Teach them about your budget and what you can and cannot afford, and your expectations for spending. Address issues like respect, honesty and obedience with clear rules - no lying, no cheating, everyone gets respect. Talk with your teen about how the rules support your boundaries and beliefs for the way your home should run.



Application

Call a family meeting and work on the rules together. Include everyone in the decision-making. You, as parents, have the ultimate say, but don't hesitate to give up some ground in one area in order to gain ground in another. Know what you're willing to compromise before the meeting begins.

Use the family worksheets in the back cover to write down the new rules. Update the list as you have more time to consider and learn what rules are most important to your family's Belief System for Discipline.

About Rules

- Rules are established to reinforce your beliefs about the way your home should run, and define what is acceptable and what is not.
- Rules unite a family around a central set of beliefs and boundaries.
- Rules need to be relevant and current, and give your child direction.
- Rules will always be a part of life, and your child needs to know how to follow rules.
- Rules help a child know where the line is drawn between acceptable and unacceptable behavior.
- Rules should be adjusted as your child matures and shows more responsibility.
- Rules are different from boundaries. Boundaries pertain to the person; rules pertain to managing resources and the function of your home.
- Rules are about managing time, relationships, and resources.
- Rules should be enforced within the context of your relationship, and be based on a longing for your child to succeed.

Sharing A Story

A small group of Heartlight staff and residents were out in the woods having a blast by annihilating one another with paintballs. Afterward, I was surprised by a young man who refused to clean his paintball gun before putting it away. He defiantly stated he would not clean the gun, and unleashed a verbal tirade on me. I responded by saying, "Well, you played, and you know the rule: everybody cleans their own equipment after we play. And now, we have another problem. It is called disrespect. You are not allowed to be disrespectful."

Silence.

I continued, "Because you broke the gun-cleaning rule and were disrespectful too, you will have to work in the yard, and lose your privileges until you decide to clean the paintball gun."

Later that week, after many hours on work projects, he found me and said, "Hey I want you to know I am sorry about the thing with the paintball. Where's the gun?" As I set it out for him to clean, I said, "You are a good man, but you need to work through being disrespectful and acting like a four-year-old. It is killing your relationships. It's the reason you don't have friends around you. I want something better for you. This lesson is not about the stupid gun. It's about you."

But, he already knew that by then. The consequences had already helped him figure that out. I could have tried explaining it to him with words, but, the consequences spoke louder than any conversation.

STEP THREE: Establish Consequences

A sensible person learns from correction. Proverbs 19:2b

The final step in creating a belief system for discipline in your home is to develop consequences that support your household rules. Communicating consequences ahead of time, and strictly enforcing them, helps a teen become more sensible, mature and responsible. Managing consequences is one of the most important parenting roles you fulfill. **When applied properly, consequences, more than anything else, teach a teen to think differently.**

DO CONSEQUENCES EVER FAIL? Consequences, when correctly applied, don't often fail. As a parent, you may fail by creating consequences that aren't helpful, or relevant to your teen's life. Or, worse, you don't enforce consequences at all. You rescue your teen before they feel the sting of their bad choice or inappropriate behavior. It's important to let consequences help your child learn to think for himself, and figure out the appropriate action to take.

GIVING & TAKING AWAY. How do you know what kind of consequence to apply? I believe it's good to give a teen something, teach them to do well with it, and take it away from them when they blow it. Start with a simple consequence, and increase the weight of the consequence for continued rule-breaking.

It helps to know what your child values the most. Do they value time with friends, texting, the car, video games, cell phone and music? Do they value the fact that you pay for their car insurance, gas, trips, or participation in activities and events? Whatever your teen values the most, is a good place to start taking things away.

Take away their most-valued possession for breaking your most valued rule. Take away the second thing they value most for the next most important rule on your list. If they value having a car the most, then a simple consequence might be: "If you aren't home by 9:30, then you can't use the car tomorrow." If they continue to miss curfew, increase the consequence and don't let them drive for quite a while. Don't offer them rides. Let them take the big yellow school bus. Don't let them drive your car at all until the problem with curfew is solved completely. It may mean they don't get to drive for quite some time. If that happens, don't bail them out.

FOLLOWING THROUGH. **Parents do well in telling their teens what they believe. They do well lecturing about rules and letting their teens know what is expected. What most parents don't do well is allowing the consequences of a teen's actions have their full affect to help curb or stop a child's inappropriate behavior or wrongful actions.**

You may want your child to change, but don't follow through on consequences because you're afraid your child might be inconvenienced, go through pain, or suffer a little. But remember: it's better to learn a lesson early in life while the consequences are lesser, than learning them as adults when consequences can be life-changing. To help you better understand this idea, here are some examples:

- If they flunk a class, let them meet with the teacher and figure out how to make up the credit.
- If they get a speeding ticket, let them pay for it, and the higher insurance premiums.
- If they get fired from a job, let them feel your comfort, but don't accommodate their foolish and blame-shifting conversations.
- If they get arrested, let them spend time in jail and understand what it is like to be locked up. I would much rather have a child locked up for one day at age 17, than to be locked up for years when they are 23.
- If they choose the wrong entertainment, let them sit home for a few weekends.

- If they don't finish their homework, then take away a privilege.
- If they overextend their cell phone minutes, make them pay for the extra charges.

Your child will keep doing something until the pain from their actions is greater than the pleasure they receive. When you rescue them you may be getting in the way of what God really desires to teach them. Don't rescue them. Don't bail them out. Don't think you are helping by keeping them from feeling pain and hardship from their foolish actions. Let consequences have their full affect. Doing so will lead your teen **away** from the behavior that got them there in the first place.

IMPLEMENT CHANGE ONE STEP AT A TIME. It's important to implement changes to your discipline structure carefully, especially if you have never had much success with applying consequences for inappropriate behavior. Decide ahead of time what the consequences will be, and clearly communicate them to everyone in your family, not just your teen. If you haven't done such a good job of that up until now, then start by letting your teen know you've haven't done such a good job in certain areas of discipline, but you will make some changes that involves everyone soon.

Give them time to adjust to the idea that things will be different before you let them know exactly how it will look. Then, call everyone together and work out your ideas for the new rules and consequences together.

Letting your teen know what will happen in advance is a key part of the success of your belief system.

Your teen may surprise you and come up with even stricter requirements than you originally planned. And, when it comes time to give consequences, your teen knows exactly what to expect, and exactly why to expect them.

MORE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES. Breaking household rules is one thing. Life-changing, illegal, or dangerous behavior calls for serious consequences that get your teen's undivided attention.

A teen needs to know you will never support self-destructive, immoral or illegal behavior. The consequences for this type of problem must be drastic, and may include removing them from school, refusing to bail them out of jail when they are clearly at fault, administering drug tests as a requirement of staying in your home, participation in counseling, or taking medication as prescribed.

TOUGH & TENDER. There are two sides to administering consequences, the tough and the tender. The tough side is saying to your child, *"I will stand in front of you and stop you when you are doing something that is wrong."* The tender side is, *"I want something more for you, for your own good."* Above all, it's critical for your child to know, "*Nothing you do will make me love you more; nothing you do will make me love you less."*

LIMIT THEM BUT OFFER RELATIONSHIP. Your teen needs to experience a taste of the character of God in the way you discipline and love them. They want the strength of a warrior and the tender, caring side of your help to get them through their difficulties. Make it part of your belief system to spend time together, even if your teen is suffering the consequences of a poor choice or bad behavior.

Application

Continue using the spreadsheet in the back of the book to write down consequences as they relate to what you believe should happen with discipline in your home. As you have more time to consider and learn what consequences and rewards are most important to your own family's Belief System for Discipline, take time to update them. Don't forget to consider both positive and negative consequences.



- Managing consequences is one of the most important parenting roles you fulfill.
- When applied properly, consequences, more than anything else in their life, teach a teen to think differently in a way that lecturing or telling them cannot.
- Consequences help them figure out the right way to respond, a better way to think, and a better way to behave.
- Communicate the consequences for rule-breaking well in advance, and make sure it's clearly understood by everyone.
- Allow your teen to make mistakes, so that the consequences can teach him a more mature response for the next time.
- Make consequences relevant to your teen's life, and the lessons he needs to learn most.
- Use the things they value the most as ammunition in your arsenal of consequences. Be generous in giving them the things they want, and serious about taking them away for behaving inappropriately.
- Engage in a continued relationship of unconditional love, even when your teen faces consequences. Require your teen to spend time with you, even if they don't want to.
- Don't bail them out of the consequences. Rescuing them once means you'll just have to rescue them again.
- Consequences help push your teen in the right direction, and effectively put an end to the parenting chaos in your home.

Final Thoughts

Change is not easy. And most of us don't like it. But without change, we are choosing to remain the same, and preventing the hand of God to further develop us, our relationships, and members of our family into the people He desires us to be.

God has called you in your role as a parent for a purpose that asks for and demands "better" for you and your family. So let me encourage you to "be the one" to stand for something good, honorable, and necessary. For without change, you all might end up in a place where you really didn't want to be. Worse yet, you might never experience what God has in store for your family by adhering to His principles.

Most times, the same old patterns of parenting that you used in the early elementary school years, continue into the adolescent years. And when they do, parents quickly learn the old ways of yesteryear don't work very well with today's teens. The need for changing your parenting style becomes obvious.

Hopefully, this workbook will give you time to reflect on what you desire for your family, and come to the understanding of what God wants to do within your family as well. It is your time to make a change, to set a new path, and to establish some needed areas that have been forgotten along this sometimes struggling path called parenting.

It's also a time to stop some "stuff" that just doesn't need to happen any more. The temporary challenge of implementing change is worth the long term results of meeting greater needs within your family.

As I said, change is tough. But hang in there, and you'll see that the efforts put into changing some "old ways" and implementing some new ways will be most beneficial for your family's future.

May God richly bless your efforts as you tackle the important task of change placed before you.



Mark Gregston

Example Worksheet

Use this worksheet as an example for your own worksheet on the interior of this cover.

Areas Of Change:

1. Family members will treat one another with respect at all times.
2. All family members will abide by the law, and not participate in any intoxicating substance use or abuse.
3. Family members will participate in wholesome forms of entertainment.
4. No one gets to verbally dump on anyone else.
5. We will ask permission before taking another's things for our own use.
6. Family members will be truthful & kind.
7. We will limit unhealthy or illegal influences in our home.
8. Mom and Dad will not be taken advantage of financially.

Beliefs	Rules	Consequences
We believe everyone deserves to be treated with respect.	Talk with respect to one another. Talk with respect to your parents. Talk with respect to people inside and outside our home.	Minor Infraction: loss of a minor privilege Signicant Infraction: loss of 2 minor privileges. Major Infraction: loss of major privilege
We believe drugs, smoking, and underage drinking, jeopardizes the health and safety of family members.	No smoking if you are under the age of 18. No drinking if you are under the age of 21. No intoxicating substances or illegal use of any drug, no drugs in our home, no friends using drugs.	Minor Infraction: grounded one month Signicant Infraction: loss of many privileges for several months, drug counseling Major Infraction: to be discussed (if over 18, may need to permanently leave our home)
We believe that there are certain kinds of music, television, computer games and books that can be harmful to the emotional and spiritual growth of our family.	Movies rated PG-13 and R are to be viewed only with parent approval. Games, books & tv with violence and/or sexual overtones are subject to review and approval. Music with violence, profane language, depressing and/or sexual overtones are subject to review and approval.	Minor Infraction: loss of the specific item (book, cd, etc.) Signicant Infraction: loss of the privilege of that particular entertainment for one week Major Infraction: Loss of the privilege for same entertainment for one month or more

Family Worksheet

Using the Areas of Change you listed on page 7, determine your beliefs, and the rules and consequences that will support those beliefs.

Beliefs	Rules	Consequences

Beliefs	Rules	Consequences