Bob: As a parent, you realize, undoubtedly, that at the core of your child is selfishness; right? Here's Paul David Tripp.

Paul: Ultimately, the idol of idols is *self*. Parents, hear what I am about to say: “Your children don’t know that! How about helping him to see something that has the power to radically change his life?”

Bob: This is *FamilyLife Today* for Wednesday, January 25th. Our host is the President of *FamilyLife*®, Dennis Rainey. I’m Bob Lepine. We’ll talk today about the big things parents need to make sure we are teaching our children—the big things we’ve got to make sure they’re getting. Stay with us.

And welcome to *FamilyLife Today*. Thanks for joining us. I think we’ve got a lot of listeners who are going to be disappointed with the book that Paul Tripp has written.

Dennis: [Laughing] Really?

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: [Still laughing] Well that’s a great way—that’s a great way / a new way to offend a guest, here on *FamilyLife Today*!

Paul: I am so thankful right now. [Laughter]

Bob: Here’s the reason why I say that; because I think we have a lot of listeners, who are like Mary Ann and I were when we had kids at home—they’re looking for a book that will give them the formula—

Dennis: Oh yes, an equation; sure.

Bob: –that will give them the *recipe*: “If you do ‘A,’ ‘B,’ ‘C,’ and ‘D,’ your kids will turn out perfect.” Doggone it, this book just does not do that!

Dennis: Yes. Well, Paul David Tripp is still here in the studio—he didn’t leave. [Laughter]
Paul: That’s right—*almost* after that last comment! [Laughter]

Dennis: And he has written a book called *Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family*. It’s not an equation—it is a book filled with the process of redemption and how parents can fulfill, I think, what is the most noble, most challenging assignment I think that is ever given to two people which is—give birth, and then raise the next generation, and be a part of assisting God in doing what He wants to do in shaping the soul of their children.

Paul David, I just want to take you to a story in the book that you tell that I just honestly can’t believe that one of your children felt this way. It was on a vacation of yours. You had a tradition of making cinnamon rolls, and they were *world class* cinnamon rolls. [Laughter] One of your kids took issue with this *world class* cinnamon roll that was being homemade—just for him—laboring long and hard on his behalf. [Laughter]

Paul: Yes; you know, I knew what was going to happen—these are the best cinnamon rolls in the universe.

Bob: I’d like to be the judge of that. [Laughter]

Paul: I had put those cinnamon rolls in the oven. I knew that beautiful smell would waft down the hallway, and my children would begin to come out of their rooms to worship. [Laughter]

Dennis: I can almost smell it now.

Paul: They’d bow at my feet and say, “How blessed I am to have a father like you.”

Bob: “Oh, great cinnamon-roll maker.” [Laughter]

Paul: Well, my first son showed up and said, “Dad, do you mind if I make something else for breakfast?”

Bob: Oh! [Laughter]

Paul: My first thought was: “What are you?—an idiot?” [Laughter]

Dennis: “Are you my son?”—is what I’d ask! [Laughter]

Paul: That’s right. And he was then just newly-married and said, “My wife doesn’t like sweet things for breakfast.” So he makes, for her, scrambled eggs.

Dennis: It’s a personal rejection of *you*. 
Paul: Absolutely; it’s all about me.

Dennis: Every parent in the universe knows exactly what you’re talking about.

Paul: Yes.

Dennis: So what you challenge parents to do in your book is to move away from thinking, “It’s about me, as a parent;—

Paul: Yes.

Dennis: —“and it’s about what God wants to do in me, as a parent, and what He also wants to do in our children and use us, as parents, to shape them for the next generation.”

Paul: I respond to parenting opportunities as an owner—my life / my children—or as an ambassador—God’s children and “What does it look like to represent what He would want to do in the lives of my children?”

Dennis: Explain what He does want to do, just in summary, what we’ve been talking about here this week.

Paul: He wants my children to experience the power of His grace—insight-giving grace; conviction-producing grace; forgiving grace; transforming grace. I’m always asking the question, every day, again and again: “What does God want to accomplish in this moment?”

Dennis: You’re helping your children grow up spiritually.

Paul: Absolutely.

Dennis: And one of the things you want to address, as you do that, is their character.

Paul: Yes; I think it’s very important. I think parents miss this—that not every wrong thing my child does is a direct rebellion to authority. Some of the wrongs my children do are the result of a lack of character.

Let me give you a picture—it’s Tuesday night. It’s an open-floor plan house. Mom is in the kitchen—she’s in nervous, full frenetic work because, in an hour, a family of six is coming over for dinner; and she’s not near being ready. Within view of that, our three children—seven, nine and eleven — they’re playing Wii® bowling—that’s a video game, for those of you still riding a horse. [Laughter]

I would ask: “What’s wrong with this scene?” Well, some of you are thinking, “If I’m working hard in the kitchen and my children are playing together—God has visited my
house!” But there’s something wrong with this scene! [Laughter] Because every one of those children—seven, nine and eleven—not only are sophisticated enough to know that Mom’s in a bad place and needs help, but all of them are in possession of skills that could help their mother; but they don’t care. They couldn’t give a rip.

Let me just say this: “You wouldn’t want that person as your neighbor. You wouldn’t want that person as your boss. You wouldn’t want that person as your spouse. It’s not okay.” Now, it’s not rebellion; because they haven’t been given a command that they’re disobeying, but there’s something broken inside of them—

Dennis: Yes; yes.

Paul: —that doesn’t make them respond to the situation in the way they should walk in and say, “Mom, how can I help you?”

Those are gorgeous moments of opportunity; because I’m going to say something that will be a surprise to you: “Those character moments connect you to the single most important issue in all of the human existence. I can say it in a word—‘worship.’” Now, some of you—when you hear the word, “worship,”—you think, “Sunday morning” / you think, “service.” What you need to understand is—worship for human beings is, first, our identity before it’s ever our activity. We are worshippers. You don’t just worship on Sunday. You really worship your way through every moment of every day.

Now, what does that mean for your children? I think this is just incredibly profound. It means that something is always ruling the heart of my child. What rules the heart of my child will then control their responses to the situations in relationship to their life. Think back with that video game moment. What’s ruling the heart of my children? It’s easy to answer—“Pleasure.” Is pleasure a bad thing? No; it’s not a bad thing, but it must not rule your heart.

A desire for even a good thing becomes a bad thing when it becomes a ruling thing. And because pleasure is ruling their hearts, they’re not responding in this way / in this situation, when it’s appropriate—when it’s honoring God / in a way that’s loving to their mom and dad. Because the idol of pleasure rules their hearts, they break both of God’s commands to us—they are not loving God / they’re not loving—

Dennis: They’re not thinking about the people.

Paul: —their mom. No.

Dennis: Thinking of themselves: “What’s bringing me pleasure? What’s entertaining to me?”

Paul: Because, ultimately, the idol of idols is self. If pleasure, at this moment, is getting me what I want, I don’t care about your need.
Now, I think this is very important to say: “Parents, hear what I’m about to say: ‘Your children don’t know that! They don’t know that!’ You’ve never had a situation, where you go into a room and say, “Why didn’t you help Mom?” and your child said, “Well, I’m an idolater, of course. My heart was ruled by something else. You should expect worse from me!” [Laughter]

So here’s what an ambassador does: “An ambassador lovingly and patiently unfolds mysteries of the universe to your children.” There are things that God tells us about why people do the things they do that are liberating—insight-giving—that change the whole way you think about yourself and think about life. Don’t go in and just instill guilt—don’t go in and say: “Unplug the game system. Take a look at it—you’ll never see it again. [Laughter] You’ll live a video-gameless life, because how dare you do this to me?!”

Dennis: Right.

Paul: Because here’s a moment where God is revealing something in the heart of that child—the child doesn’t know—that’s your job! How about helping him to see something that has the power to radically change his life?

Dennis: What we’re talking about here really is helping a child grow up, spiritually, and assume responsibility for their own spiritual walk, which does include, as you just said, the greatest commandment: “Love God with all your heart,”—that’s worship—and then to “Love your neighbor as yourself,”—that also was worship / it is to assume the responsibility of doing God’s work with the people He’s placed around you on a daily basis.

Bob: But can you really expect a seven-year-old—you said these were seven, nine and eleven—a seven-year-old to have the maturity, at age seven, to say: “You know what? Mom’s there in the kitchen, having a hard time. I’m just in here playing a video game. I should go help her out and try to make her load lighter,”—seven?

Paul: I think that God is setting up an opportunity for me to be part of the process of that child becoming aware of that. One of the places where they lack character—we lack character, as sinners—is our willingness to own responsibility for our own behavior. We all carry around with us an inner lawyer that naturally makes us rise to our defense. All of us like to think we’re more righteous than unrighteous.

I don’t expect that the minute I have this conversation my child is going to say: “That’s exactly me. I agree with you”; but I’m thankful for the opportunity. We’re going to have that again and again. I’m not demanding that this be a snapshot—I know we’ve been called to a process of grace. I want him to begin to understand what’s going on inside of him. One of the key things I want him to begin to get hold of is that his heart is always under the rulership of something.
I want to give you a family example. I’m doing this with my youngest son, Darnay, from earliest days—I mean, three/four years old—having these conversations. I know he’s not going to fully understand this conversation, but I know he’s assimilating bits and pieces.

Darnay is now a sports broadcaster—he was a very good athlete / he was a great basketball player. He would come home from school and he would shoot foul shots, trying to get his percentage up—in sets of 100. I would be used to hearing the rhythm of the ball—I’m making dinner—and it stops. He comes in. He’s got the ball under his arm—this is a 15-year-old—and he asks me this question—he said, “Dad, how do you know when a good thing like basketball has become an idol in your life?” I ran across the room, I threw my arms around him and I said: “Praise God! Praise God! Praise God! Praise God that you would ever ask that question!”

Dennis: Yes; really!

Paul: “That’s God’s grace! You were out there—I wasn’t lecturing to you. That was in your heart; and you began to wonder, ‘Have I allowed this thing to be more in my life than it should be?’ That’s rescuing grace.”

Now, where did that insight begin?—at [ages] three, and four, and five—and endless conversations. Now, it’s not Dad talking to son anymore; it’s the Spirit of God talking to the son, but with content from those conversations over all those years. That’s parenting.

Dennis: He’s got it. In fact, I love a statement you made to Bob and me, earlier, just about this idea that we’re—we’re always defending ourselves / we have an internal lawyer. You said you don’t have an internal lawyer—you said—

Paul: “I have an internal law firm.” [Laughter] So I know what this is like.

Dennis: A whole bunch of attorneys.

Paul: Yes! Yes.

Dennis: Some of us, honestly, that’s how we deal—our hearts aren’t teachable.

Paul: Yes.

Dennis: We’re not willing to hear the truth. By the way, as a parent, if you’re not willing to hear the truth, it’s going to be hard for you to dispense the truth.

Paul: You have to affirm or you will not be that tender ambassador—that you’re more like that child than unlike him. When you recognize your desperate need of grace, you are much more pre-dispositioned to give grace to that child. It’s when you walk into the
room—affirming your righteousness—that you tend to beat the kid with the law because—listen, to the unrighteous / the people recognize they’re unrighteous—the law is no hope-giver. It’s when you recognize your need of grace—and you feel, in your heart, the relief of the grace of Jesus—that you want to give that grace to your child.

Bob: I have to ask you a very practical question and that is: “Does the rod play a role in developing character in a child?”

Paul: Sure it does! I love Proverbs 22, where it says, “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him.” Now, here’s what the Bible’s saying—the most—the most dangerous thing inside of my child is foolishness. What’s the epicenter of foolishness according to the Psalms?—denial of God. I don’t think that the Psalmist is in any way talking about philosophical atheism. It’s talking about, in my everyday life, I live like God doesn’t exist—I put myself in the center of the world and make it all about me. That foolishness is inside of my child. That foolishness will destroy his life—but he’s got a problem—he’s six years old, and he doesn’t understand the implications of this foolishness to everyday life because he lacks experience.

So what God has done—He’s ordained a painful consequence to get placed next to an act of foolishness so the child begins to understand: “When I do foolish things, bad things happen,”—that’s the connection! That’s a beautiful thing. Actually, it’s not like I quit dealing with the heart and then I administer physical discipline. Physical discipline is targeting the heart, because it’s teaching the child something about the dangers of his foolishness that he can never get on his own; because he lacks experience to understand the implications of his foolishness.

Bob: A lot of young parents today, recoiling at the idea of bringing a rod of correction / bringing physical punishment toward a child—what would you say to them?

Paul: Well, I would say this: “If you’re pushing, shoving, pinching, yanking, slapping your children—you’re abusing your children.

Bob: Right.

Paul: That has nothing to do with the careful grace of physical discipline—where I know I have to do it / I pray that God would give me love and tenderness and grace as I do it. I do that carefully—I combine it with instruction and correction; I give the child an opportunity to confess his misbehavior / to cry out for God’s help—I’m surrounding this with beautiful things; but I know that there’s a time bomb inside of this child. The earlier that foolishness is driven out, the more protection of God’s grace comes into the life of that child.

The Bible calls us to things that are so wise. The Proverbs just—just lays out the wisdom of this. Our replacements are not wise. I want to say this to parents: “Stop
counting! Can you imagine God giving us His law on Mount Sinai, saying, ‘Thou shalt not murder—one, two, three, four.”

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dennis:** And stop negotiating too.

**Paul:** Yes.

**Dennis:** Stop treating your child like he or she is a peer. You are the parent. God put you in the child’s life, as we’ve been talking about here this week, to help shape the soul of the child and grow him or her up to maturity to become an adult.

**Paul:** That exercise of authority is such a grace, because it goes after two lies that every child believes. One is the lie of autonomy: “My life belongs to me, and I have the right to use it however I want.” That’s a lie. If there is a Creator, He owns you—there’s no such thing as human autonomy. The second lie is the lie of self-sufficiency: “I have everything inside of myself to be what I’m supposed to be and do what I’m supposed to do.” You see both of those lies in your children.

What authority does is reminds my children that neither one of those things is true; because, if you take a young person, who’s now 19 or 20, and they still believe in autonomy and self-sufficiency, they will destroy their lives. We were meant to live under authority / we were meant to humbly recognize that we are dependent. Your children have stuff inside of them that will take them in a direction that will lead to the sad destruction of their lives—they need rescue.

You will choose to rescue or indulge, and you’ve been called to rescue. How important is that? Well, if you are an ambassador, that’s how God chose to deal with His broken world: “I’m going to send a Rescuer; His name is Jesus. We’re going to turn this thing around because I know where My creatures are heading, and it’s not good.”

**Dennis:** “And We are going to give them a new heart—

**Paul:** Yes.

**Dennis:** —“and an ability to be able to please God.”

**Paul:** Absolutely.

**Dennis:** I just have to say—if you don’t do this kind of stuff that we’re talking about here, I can’t guarantee this is going to be the end result—but we have a lot of young people today, that I’m seeing, who live with this philosophy of entitlement, where: “They’ve been born in this country; therefore, they are entitled to be happy / entitled for
material privileges.” They don’t understand that they’re not going to be able to have it all—increasingly, that’s going to be true.

Paul David, I want to thank you for your book, Parenting—it’s a great book / it’s a stimulating book. I’m going to give this one right here to one of my children—I’m praying about which one to give it to, because we’ve got a lot going on in our family [Laughter] with a bunch of grandkids.

This would make a great book for grandparents to give to their adult children, who are raising the next generation—or if you’re just starting out parenting or if you’re raising a teenager—I think this will be a book that brings a lot of hope to your life, as a parent, and bring a lot of perspective. I think, ultimately, it’s going to bring a lot of growth to your life in your relationship with Jesus Christ.

Paul: Amen.

Dennis: Paul David—thanks for being with us. I sure hope you’ll come back in spite of how Bob and I offend you. [Laughter]

Paul: I will, and I’ll expect the offense.

Bob: Well, and we’ll get a chance to get right to it, here in a couple of weeks, because Paul is going to be with us on the Love Like You Mean It® marriage cruise, Valentines week. We’re glad that you and Luella are going to be with us.

In the meantime, if folks would like a copy of your book, Parenting, our website is FamilyLifeToday.com. You can order the book from us online. Again, it’s FamilyLifeToday.com; or call 1-800-FL-TODAY to order—800-358-6329—that’s 1-800-“F” as in family, “L” as in life, and then the word, “TODAY.”

You know, anytime we talk about a subject like we’ve talked about today, I’m reminded of a survey we did—and this was a number of years ago—where we asked listeners, “What are the areas that you need and want help in most?” When it came to parenting, the number one issue was the spiritual formation of a child: “How do I help my child connect with the heart of God and learn to walk with God, day in and day out?”

At FamilyLife, we’re committed to providing you with practical biblical help and hope each day so that you can, as a mom/as a dad, lead your son and your daughter in the right direction—lead them along the paths of righteousness. Ultimately, they’re going to have to decide who they’re going to follow; but we want to help you, as parents, know how you can get them pointed in the right direction.

There’s a whole team of people who stand with us, seeking to influence as many parents as possible with this kind of a message, and that’s our Legacy Partners. Legacy Partners are monthly supporters of this ministry—people who will give a donation of $25
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Tomorrow, we’re going to continue our conversation about parenting. Brian and Angela Haynes are going to be with us, and we’re going to talk about some of the challenges they’ve faced as they have led their kids through the teen years. I hope you can tune in and be with us for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, along with our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I’m Bob Lepine. We will see you back next time for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

FamilyLife Today is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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