

# VIEWS FROM THE EDGE



Mars Hill Graduate School thinkers offer fresh, thought-provoking perspectives on subjects that impact how we view the world, ourselves, others, and God. These edgy, compelling, and sometimes disruptive articles delve into issues and concerns relevant to your daily life, from current issues in the church and world, to parenting your child, to movies and the arts, to relationships and sexuality.

## SOUL SERIES

### LISTENING TO YOUR CHILDREN'S VOICE

*Faced with a parenting dilemma? Listen to the experts in your own home: your children.*

*As you learn to hear the two questions implicit in all their actions, you will understand better what your child most deeply needs in that moment. / By Dan B. Allender*

Ageing is inevitable, while becoming mature is uncertain. Our bodies grow from infancy to old age in a mere eight decades. This process of physical growth, however, is not always matched in the inner person. Some die when they are old without having truly advanced beyond adolescence. Others die young with souls having gained a weight and a depth that far exceeded their years.

Growing up, as opposed to merely growing old, compels us to embrace both joy and sorrow. To mature we must learn to suffer and not yield or turn hard. To mature we must also learn to engage joy and not demand that it hang around, nor fabricate a counterfeit when it departs. There are many other ways to measure maturity, perhaps, but they all dance to the music of sorrow and joy.

How we embrace—or refuse to hold—sorrow and joy will define our lives. If we capitulate to sorrow, we will become cowards. If we allow sorrow to make us hard, then we will grow cold and eventually cruel. If we demand that joy remain constant, we will become self-consumed. And if we create a counterfeit joy, our lives will be riddled with impulsivity and addictions.

Life demands that we either grow or stagnate. As difficult as it is to face this truth regarding my own life, it is harder for me to grasp regarding my children. I know I must suffer, struggle, grow, and sometimes fail to mature. But when this reality shows itself to be just as true for my children, I can barely endure it.

#### **The Voice of Sorrow**

I heard the sound of muffled tears coming from my 16-year-old daughter's room. The door was closed, and her CD player tried to provide a cover for her pain. But when the music quieted between songs, I could hear her crying. My ear was pasted against the door, as it is whenever I fear that some harm is threatening one of my children. (Try to picture my oldest daughter's shock and disdain on another occasion when, after secretly plotting either the overthrow of the government or a clandestine rendezvous with friends, she opened her door to see her unbalanced father topple to the floor. If you are spying, don't lean against your child's door.)

As the sobs continued, I stood against my daughter's door, frozen and uncertain. Should I knock? Should I wait and ask about her day later at dinner? Should I go

off somewhere and pray, get busy with some task, or simply try hard not to worry? Why doesn't someone tell me exactly what to do? I know enough to love my children, provide boundaries and consequences, and be patient with them. But what am I to do with tears? Do I let her work it out on her own, or do I boldly enter where no man, especially a father, has gone before?

I knocked, and there was silence. The music continued, but the tears dried up at the first sign of a potential intruder. When the intruder knocked again, my daughter answered the door, furious at being interrupted. A quick look told me everything. She was in pain, and she didn't want help. I was now the issue, and it was best to disappear. But as I do when I'm skiing, I had already aimed the pointy ends downhill, and due to certain forces of nature, I was fully committed. I was headed down the slope no matter what my daughter did or said.

I don't know what your parental default mode might be, but mine, whenever in doubt, is to state the obvious. "I heard tears," I began. "The door was closed. You are now not crying, but frowning. I know privacy is more important to you than food.

You are now grimacing, and your lower lip is jutting out farther than your nose.”

That last remark turned the tide. She broke, slightly. A smile rose and then departed like the winter sun in Seattle. But for a brief moment, a glorious moment, we made connection, and she let me stand in the doorway as a person, not merely as a parent.

I was never invited in, but I did hear a sketchy outline of a run-in with two of her girlfriends that had humiliated her in front of a guy she liked. Perhaps I wasn't invited into her room because she could see the fury rising in my eyes. I knew both of the friends in question, and I wanted to corner them in some public place and give them a taste of the same poison they had fed my daughter. How dare they hurt her after all the times she had stood beside them as they suffered with parents, boyfriends, school, and other calamities of life!

I'd rather take a bullet than see my children suffer. But I can't. I can protect them at some points, but those moments are too few and much too far between. Often, in fact, my efforts to warn them of impending danger or even to jump in front of the oncoming train actually intensify their suffering and intrude on the process of their maturing. So when do I jump to protect them, and when do I stand back and, in anguish, just watch and wait? I want answers and solutions!

There are times when I can't do anything other than offer a heroic gesture, no matter how futile; and there are other times when I can easily do something, yet I must stand back and let the process play itself out. I want my children to mature; I just don't want them to have to mature through suffering. But you can't have one without the other.

### The Voice of Joy

There were eight minutes left, and our team was down 12 to 4. My seventh grader, Andrew, was the second-team goalie on the middle-school lacrosse squad. We were playing in the district finals, and the winner would go on to the state tournament. We

had beaten this team before, and the match was intense and exciting. But for some reason our team was sluggish and nervous. As the game began to wind down and it looked hopeless, my son was sent onto the field. The home crowd began chanting his name: “Andrew, Andrew, Andrew...” Each time his name rose, my stomach tightened. He was going against a first-class squad that wanted to run the score to the high heavens at the expense of not only our team, but now also my son.

The first attack of the goal came

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Are you growing up or merely growing old? To mature we must learn to suffer and not yield or turn hard. We must also learn to engage joy and not demand that it hang around, nor fabricate a counterfeit when it departs.

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within a minute after Andrew entered the game. The shooters worked the ball downfield, and I could see my son's body tense and his eyes widen. The first throw was hurled at his head. The hard lacrosse ball was a blur, and I involuntarily closed my eyes and held my breath. When I opened my eyes again and breathed, I saw that he had deftly caught the ball in his goalie stick and was throwing it to a teammate. The crowd roared. I could see his breathing slow down and his face relax. Then I looked at the clock and realized I would have to watch this spectacle for another seven minutes.

It is one of the oddest components of life. We want to succeed, and we feel something like joy when we are successful. Yet if we're convinced that joy is based on performance, we'll feel more and more pressure to always succeed. And the greater the pressure, the more likely we are to fail. In this way, joy intensifies sorrow.

The game proceeded, and the minutes slowed to a crawl. Andrew turned away six attacks, and finally they scored on him. He had played better than the first-team goalie, yet he had allowed a score. Now he was caught between the pleasure of playing well and the sting of his team's loss. When the game ended, many congratulated him on his fine performance. But when I put my hand on his shoulder, he shrugged it off. He didn't want his father touching him in front of his friends, and I suspect he didn't want anyone to touch his glory and either

take a portion of it or disturb the fragile mantle he was wearing.

Once we got into the car, I didn't know what to say. I had told him that he played well and that I was proud of him. I asked what the coach had said (“Nothing much”). I so wanted to join his joy, but he persisted in holding onto it without my intrusion. I felt isolated and hurt.

Why don't the experts tell us that we will feel lonely and alone, envious and jealous, confused and angry over our children's successes and failures? Or is it only me?

### How Children Raise Parents

As difficult as it is to see our children grow up, it is a stroll in the park compared to being grown up by our children. To be a parent is one of the most terrifying, thrilling, overwhelming, and joyful experiences of life. It is the place where we become adults (if we are ever to be so) as we experience the most remarkable and unusual gift of life—being grown up by our own children.

There is no question about our parental responsibility to raise our children. We are older, wiser, and more experienced. The bruises of life have prepared us to see beyond the current calamity or the short-lived, yet exuberant, success. We parents must be our children's elders, coaches, counselors, mentors, cheerleaders. In other

words, we parents must parent.

However, to be *great* parents, we must allow our children to shape our lives. We must not only guide and shape our children, but we must also go to them as students of life. If we will allow it, our children will grow us up to be mature adults who can offer them a taste of heaven. Thus the blessing is bestowed on both.

Becoming great parents is a learning process—it does not involve our following a list of rules. But to succeed in this learning process, we must let go of two pervasive myths: We must let go of the myth that right influence guarantees the desired results, and we must discard our unswerving faith in the power of right principles to guarantee success. This learning process requires a change in our practices and also a shift in our beliefs—neither of which is easy. But it's entirely possible if we keep in mind that our children raise us and, in so doing, make it possible for us to raise them well.

### Examining and Discarding the Myths

We all share a central goal: parenting our children in such a way that they will become God-honoring, self-sacrificing, loving, and productive adults. However, in working toward this goal, we have to first dispense with the two myths that steal power from our parenting. Let's look first at the myth that says right influence guarantees the desired results.

### Does Right Influence Really Guarantee Desired Results?

We assume that if we give our children a “good” home—love, positive experiences, discipline, a quality education, and sufficient opportunities for success—they'll pass through childhood to adolescence with few bumps. We expect a good home life to move our children through college to marriage, family, career, church, and civic responsibilities with ease; and if not with complete ease, at least with sufficient confidence. We believe this process to be inevitable, the cause-and-effect relationship of responsible parenting that produces the well-adjusted and productive adults of

tomorrow. That is, the results are inevitable if we can just keep our kids away from obstreperous peers, the pernicious media, and the sex and violence of youth culture.

We cling to this “good influence” myth as if it were a promise from God, rather than seeing it as the religious wishful thinking that it truly is. The myth begins with the assumption that most middle-class homes have at least one parent on site, likely two, who will provide sufficient care and oversight to help children progress from childhood to successful adulthood; and not just successful adulthood, but a level of adult achievement that exceeds that of their parents.

This assumption is actually more cultural than it is biblical. It draws from cultural expectations that “good” parents provide their children with all the benefits the parents were given as children—and *more*. Our children will stand on our shoulders and climb the next rung on the ladder of upward mobility, or so the logic goes. If we do our part, it's virtually guaranteed that our kids will be brought to personal, social, and spiritual maturity by our hard work, prayer, and faith. Of course our efforts are bolstered by the positive influence of the social institutions we support—the educational system, church, Boy Scouts, music teachers, sports programs, and so forth.

It's difficult to argue against this assumption. On the surface, the power of good influence seems unassailable. Don't most children who are reared by caring, involved parents turn out well? Even those kids who go through rough periods in adolescence seem to eventually land full-time jobs, get married, and join the mainstream of productive citizenship. Parents make the sacrifice of leading responsible lives as their children grow up and then enjoy the reward of watching their children function as responsible adults. At least, we assume this cause-and-effect relationship holds true.

The research suggests, however, that

parents are gullible if they assume that their influence and involvement will automatically produce the next generation of mature, productive adults. Sexual adventurism is on the rise. Violence is the number-one killer of adolescents after auto accidents. Cheating in school is viewed as an acceptable way to make the grade. Today's young adults are less apt to get married, and fewer young couples are having children. Less than 17 percent of those children raised in Christian homes end up attending church.<sup>1</sup> Our children require more than a stable home environment. If they are to grow into true maturity, we must go beyond the myth of inevitable influence.

### Do Right Principles Really Guarantee Success?

All of this brings us to myth number two: our bedrock faith in the power of right principles. I admit, looking back at the way our parents raised us—especially if they were part of the World War II generation—would seem to prove the lofty promises of principled parenting. The much-admired Greatest Generation won a world war and then set about providing a secure environment and an educational system that prepared their sons and

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Parenting is the place  
where we become adults  
(if we are ever to be so) as  
we experience a remarkable  
gift—being grown up by  
our own children.

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daughters either for college or a good career and families of their own. Our parents built their child-rearing model on solid principles, and in most cases it seems to have worked.

My parents were satisfied to keep me busy with healthy activities (and out of

jail). They made sure that my homework was done, that I was involved in sports, and that I practiced my band instrument. Parenting was not rocket science, nor did it require a great deal of thought. It did require a steady hand and single-minded commitment to the goal of producing

antee: If parents adhere to the right list of biblical principles mixed with a smattering of psychological insights, their consistent implementation of these principles will provide a child with the grounding to escape harm and to grow toward health and hope. Simply follow the principles, and you and your kids will succeed.

But does this guarantee hold even a drop of water? Life doesn't unfold in a straight line, and our children aren't computer programs. Parenting is far from a scientific pursuit; it's messy and risky and a huge leap of faith. Even the best set of principles can't answer the most important parenting question: "What do I really need to do to ensure that my children will turn out all right?"

#### **Someone Has to Know What to Do!**

Here's the guarantee that proves true: Read the Scriptures, and you'll find principles worth adhering to. But look for iron-clad guarantees about how your children will turn out, and you won't find any. If anyone makes you such a promise, don't believe it.

Every time I walk into a bookstore, I check the parenting section to see what new works have appeared. I usually hunt first for books about dealing with adolescents. My children range from ages 14 to 22, and my interest in what experts have to say is not merely academic. I really do need help.

A recent "typical moment" in my family demonstrates my genuine need for help. I walked into the house from my garage office and overheard two animated conversations, indicating that my best course of action would be to retreat. My wife was exhorting my son, while my youngest daughter was bellowing at her older sister. If I'd been wise, I would have slid back out the door.

Andrew had not finished an English assignment. Annie, our oldest, had taken a pair of jeans from younger sister Amanda. Plus my wife was unhappy. Someone had forgotten to pick up the groceries, and there were four lists of chores for the

children and the husband to finish before dinner would be put on the table. All I wanted just then was a snack, perhaps a brief chat, and then a quick return to my home office. But that was not to happen. The situation I'd walked into called to mind movie images of trench warfare from World War I. You know the scene: Enemy troops are advancing, making it dangerous for you to raise your head, either to go forward or to fall back. Yet it's not an option to stay put. Your position could be overrun at any moment. You're in a no-win situation, but you've got to do *something*.

I want to find the expert who has not only figured out how to make child rearing work, but has perfected it in his or her own home. That person can show me how to turn these unattractive moments of familial warfare into happy times of warm bonding.

Perhaps my kids need more discipline. Or maybe my wife and I need to take some of the pressure off so they can just be kids. Could it be that we haven't spent enough time praying for our children? We may need more quality time as a family, or maybe we haven't yet landed on just the right sport, musical instrument, or church youth group. Our situation demands the wisdom of an expert, not the muddled thinking of a mere parent.

Now let's return to reality. Most people know that no expert has a handle on the maze of issues facing every child, parent, and family. And a book containing good parenting principles is at best a picture taken from 30,000 feet. It gives us a grand view of the terrain far below, but seldom does it provide a walking guide to choose one path over another when it really counts. When the smooth trail we've been on suddenly forks, and both options look equally steep and rocky, where are the principles that shout: "Take rocky trail A! And avoid rocky trail B at all costs!" Those are the principles I need but can't for the life of me locate.

#### **Beyond Principles to the Process**

When the skies are clear and everyone is happy and the kids are thriving, we feel

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children who would achieve more than their parents had.

But that was then. Changing culture has made parenting a much more demanding and perilous calling. By almost every measure we live in a more dangerous world today. In the '60s suburban children didn't head off to school wondering if they would be gunned down by a classmate. Few eighth-graders met a friend at the movie theater anticipating group oral sex. Songs were not broadcast on the radio advocating the rape and murder of young women. But in our children's world, sex is devalued and violence is glorified. It's no mystery why our culture blesses cynicism. What alternative do we have?

Our culture continues to be in the throes of radical changes. The danger is high and the consequences of failure are overwhelming, so we demand that someone in authority tell us what to do. In times of chaos and uncertainty, sound principles do much to calm fears. Which of us right-thinking parents would not want to save our children from the scourge of our decadent world?

In response to that desire, the advocates of principled parenting offer a guar-

as though we must be the smartest parents on the planet. It's when we get tangled in the middle of the thicket that we realize our limitations and cry out for *the solution*. A good first step toward that solution is recognizing that we have the advantage of broad principles and the tools, intuition, and prompting that God provides when we cry out for help. But there is yet another source of help that almost all of us completely overlook, and that is the expert we have close at hand, our child. We must not turn merely to sound principles, but to the *process* of learning from our children how to parent them. And the learning process begins with learning to hear their voices.

When I walked into the house from my garage office, my son was silent as his mother voiced her displeasure over his failure to finish a major school assignment. His face indicated that he was somber but not broken and that he had only minimal desire to finish the assignment. If there was regret, it seemed he was only sad that he'd been caught. What does it mean to listen to his voice (even when he was silent) and truly see what's in his heart that is being communicated through his face? His eyes were telling a story. His facial muscles were tense and full of unspoken anger.

Amanda's voice was shrill and rancorous when she accused her older sister of taking her jeans. Annie was defiant, unmoved by her sister's accusations. What does it mean to hear their voices? We must become better at hearing what is spoken behind the actual words being said. We must learn how to read our children's core questions, accusations, and invitations.

#### **Listening for the Core Questions**

Beginning with the first day of life outside the womb, every child is asking two core questions: "Am I loved?" and "Can I get my own way?" These two questions mark us throughout life, and the answers we receive set the course for how we live.

As a parent I am called to answer both of these questions not only accurately and continuously, but also simultaneously.

Parenting is not difficult; it is impossible. How am I to answer both questions for Andrew when his far-away, disinterested gaze is registering now on other questions: "Can't I just do this homework later? Mom, why can't you finish the project for me? And anyway, why isn't it still summer vacation?"

It would not be all that difficult to veto Andrew's evening plans and make him finish the assignment. But is that what he needs most? Is it a matter of keeping him home, giving him a hug, and reminding

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him that we love him and are doing this for his good? The question "Am I loved?" is not easily answered by cheap words of solace. Truly listening to his voice, on the other hand, does not mean hearing how tired he is and how unfair it is to have all this work to do and then cutting him slack so he doesn't have to finish the assignment. To answer yes to his question "Can I get my own way?" would be cheap grace motivated by laziness or fear of answering him with a no, rather than true love for my son.

These two core questions are intended by God to compel us to face the deepest issues about the nature of life. A whining child may be asking, "Since I'm so tired, won't you do it for me?" It is also possible that the child really is asking, "Will you still delight in me if I end up blowing this test?" We can only discern the difference by learning to read our child's bent and allowing her to teach us what she most deeply needs from us at the moment.

Furthermore, we must ask and answer the two questions about our own lives: "Am I loved?" and "Can I get my own way?" We can offer answers that are sure, rich, and deep for our child only if we know the answers for ourselves.

My failure to answer the two questions well for my children exposes my need to know and experience the answers more fully for myself. In fact, my child's accusation regarding my failure to answer well is meant to open my heart to hearing the voice of God. This is one way that my children help me mature into a true adult.

#### **Listening to Core Accusations**

Despite what we saw earlier about guarantees, there is one guarantee about parenting: We all fail to answer the two core questions accurately and simultaneously. And when our answers veer off course, we become the targets of our children's

accusations. Their words take us back to the need to really listen to them.

At times my son needs to hear clearly, "You can't get your own way," but I am too lazy or too busy, and I ignore his voice. When I fail to answer, he learns that, at certain moments or in some areas, the rules of life don't apply to him and that, if he is patient and cunning, he can get what he wants. At times my daughter just needs a gentle touch on her shoulder and an acknowledgement that life can be hard. But there have been moments when I was too self-absorbed to answer that indeed she is loved, so I've told her to stop complaining and to get her work done. It's too easy to respond to our children's voices with answers to a question they didn't ask.

Perhaps even more common is our failure to address the question that is less overt. My younger daughter's rage about her sister taking her jeans is a classic

example. Amanda was in a nasty mood and was spoiling for a fight. She wanted to be queen of the universe, but no one would bow down. A few moments of conversation with her exposed a raw disappointment from earlier in the day that was like a thorn festering in her paw. As soon as that thorn was plucked and the paw was bandaged, the borrowed jeans were traded for the opportunity to wear her older sister's leather skirt. Their interaction quickly became playful and kind. But Amanda's core question "Am I loved?" had to be answered first.

what they do and that their parents do not enjoy them. Because the parents are unwilling both to suffer the hardship of enforcing boundaries and to embrace the joy of truly loving their children, theirs is a soulless and inhuman home.

These parents fail to reflect both God's strength and his mercy. Children need to experience the strength of enforced boundaries and appropriate discipline as well as the mercy of being loved completely. The home that reflects neither aspect of God's character will either be

nanny as a surrogate parent, or overprotective, overly possessive care. The children often are poised and competent, but they lack the strength of conviction and character that develops through bumping up against consistent boundaries.

The children in this family are likely to accuse their parents of being manipulative, since the parents are unwilling to embrace suffering and their joy is found outside the home. The children's accusations surface through acting out, getting in trouble, or pushing the limits to see if anyone will be strong enough to truly care. These children want the strength of appropriate discipline and long for the experience and delight of real love.

**The Rule-Bound and Dull Response**

Parents who answer no and no—"You *cannot* get your way" and "You are *not* our delight and joy"—often establish a conservative home characterized by stringent rules, clear consequences, and high demands on the children. At the same time, this home often lacks warmth, humility, laughter, and tears. The children perform well, obey the rules, and succeed through hard work and perseverance. What they lack is passion, whimsy, playfulness, and vision.

The children in this home accuse their parents of being self-righteous and dull. The parents are lacking in joy and are only too willing to suffer the discomfort of enforcing the rules. The children's accusations are made through silence and emotional distance. They see their parents either as gods or as cold, self-righteous despots. The children's response to such adults is to remain polite and disengaged.

**The Response of Strength and Delight**

This fourth option is the only correct answer to every child's two core questions: "Yes, you are loved beyond belief" and "No, you cannot get your own way." These two answers provide children with strength that watches out for their welfare and with the delight of being loved without conditions. Sadly, this combination is the least common among the answers today's

		<b>CAN I GET MY OWN WAY?</b>	
		Yes	No
<b>AM I LOVED?</b>	No	Dangerous/ Demeaning	Rule-Bound/ Dull
	Yes	Indulgent/ Distant	Strength/ Delight

When we fail to hear their true question, we can't respond to our children's deepest desires. When we fail to listen, we do our children harm. That's when they generally respond with an accusation: "Why are you so angry and impatient with me? Why can't you be kind?" Consider the types of struggles that come to the surface when we fail to hear the real questions on our children's hearts.

Look at the chart above that links our children's two core questions with the most common parental responses. The way we listen and respond to a child's voice leads to either the child's benefit or detriment. There are four options for answering the two core questions, but most parents answer in one of the three combinations that have detrimental effects. Only the fourth combination brings benefit.

**The Dangerous and Demeaning Response**

Parents who regularly answer the two questions with "Yes, you can get your way. And no, you are not loved" raise children who learn that their parents don't care

actively abusive at one end of the continuum or, at the other extreme, the parents will be so uninvolved and emotionally removed that neither even notices when a child comes and goes.

The children in this home lack a conscience and have no concern for others. A boy will typically learn to survive on his wits; a girl often will get by on her body's assets. This is how we get macho, self-absorbed athletes and girls who get what they want by dispensing sexual favors. A child who grows up in such a home must find both love and rules elsewhere. Their search will usually lead to a gang or other group that serves as a surrogate family.

**The Indulgent and Distant Response**

Many parents answer "Yes, you can get your way" and "Yes, you are loved." Their children lack strength, and they grow up knowing only a counterfeit tenderness. These parents often are well-to-do, highly educated people who care more about public image and appearances than the hearts of their children. They dispense love through gifts, the provision of a

children are receiving. Too many parents shun the discomfort and inconvenience that come with answering no to the second question. Meanwhile, the unwillingness to embrace joy keeps many parents from answering the first question with a resounding yes.

When we fail to hear their true questions, we can't respond to our children's deepest desires. When we fail to listen, we do our children harm.

Our children hunger to know that they are loved unconditionally, through failure and success, no matter what they say or do. And, while few would ever admit it, they are dying to experience the security and comfort that come with appropriate boundaries. The best part of listening to our children as they continue to ask these questions is that they are inviting us to bring about positive change—in their lives and our own.

#### The Questions Are Invitations

As our children ask the core questions, they are wondering about two additional matters: “What is wrong with my family?” and “How can I fix things?” All children unknowingly try to fix their mother and father and change the fabric of family life. If we were really listening, we'd hear the child's unspoken words as they attempt to provoke change. Our children invite us to grow, to become *fully human*. The invitation comes by way of unvoiced questions: “Will you cry with me? Will you hold me? Will you be strong enough to face your own failure and grow as my parent?”

Every child, by asking the two core questions, is offering an astounding invitation: “Will you love me and be strong?”

Will you provide a world where for a few, brief years I can experiment with passion and play and know that I can fail without losing your delight and joy?”

If we learn to listen to our children, we will find a precious truth. What they deeply crave is the same core desire we find in *our own hearts*. As we listen, we will learn to ask the same questions of the God who has made us and called us to be parents. We will ask him if he will still delight in us if we take great risks, discard some venerated rules, and sometimes fail miserably in our efforts to raise our children well. And we'll learn to listen to his answer to us: “Yes, you are loved more than you can ever fathom” and “No, you can't have your own way. But as you pursue *my* way, you will find the deepest satisfaction your heart can ever know.”

#### QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- As you were growing up, were you delighted in? How? Could you get your own way? How did this impact who you are today?
- How do you most often respond to your children: dangerous and demeaning? indulgent and distant? rule-bound and dull? with strength and delight?
- How have you grown from parenting your children? What have your children taught you?
- What are your children's core accusations?
- In what ways do you see your children trying to fix your family?

- When have you admitted your failures to your child?
- When is the last time you cried with your child?

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#### Footnote

1. Jon Walker. “Family Life Council Says It's Time to Bring Family Back to Life.” *BP News*, 12 June 2002. Found at [www.bpnews.net](http://www.bpnews.net)

**VIEWS FROM THE EDGE** includes essays on a variety of topics grouped into three series. *The Culture Series* covers current issues and trends, leadership, music, movies, literature, art, philosophy, ethics, social justice. *The Soul Series* explores relationships, sexuality, grief and suffering, marriage, parenting, addiction. *The Text Series* looks at how the Bible calls us to be in the world, spirituality, worship, hope, faith.

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