

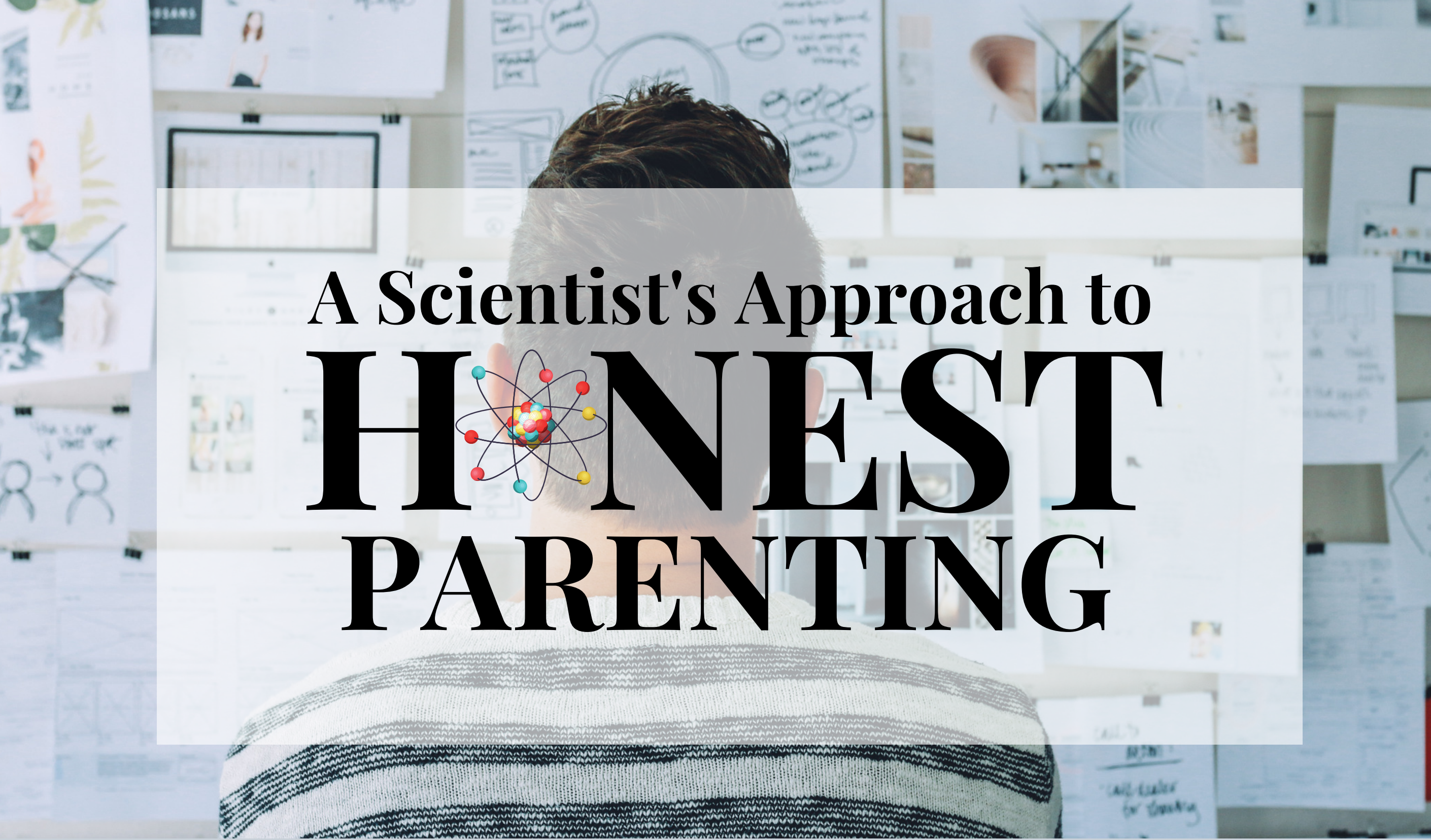


## Part I

# A Scientist's Approach to HONEST PARENTING

Cedric O. Buckley, Ph.D.





# A Scientist's Approach to **H**ONEST PARENTING

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**1**

**Introduction: Practice is Required**

**8**

**Chapter 1: Identify with the Ultimate Parent**

**16**

**Chapter 2: Observe Who They Are Becoming**

**27**

**Chapter 3: Bring Consistency into Conflicts**

**40**

**Chapter 4: Check Your Tech & Parental Controls**

**52**

**Epilogue: Keep Connected with Honest Parents**

**58**

**Glossary**





**Practice (as with medicine or in any other science) is required!**

As parents, we recognize we have an awesome responsibility to our children. We want to get this right. Everywhere we turn, we see tragic situations and circumstances involving children that worry us. We wonder if we are doing what we need to be doing to make certain our children won't be among those we see in news reports: uninterested in reading, unwilling to follow rules of “acceptable” behavior, choosing to hide things from us, getting in trouble with law enforcement officials and the judicial system, becoming violent, experimenting with illicit drugs and sex, and the list goes on. As parents, we know where these types of behaviors can land our children and we desperately want answers and plans that will guarantee our children won't become the next statistic in someone's report. We want our children to grow up safe, healthy, educated and ready to go after their dreams. Well, I am here to tell you that those wishes we have for our children are not unreasonable...and they are quite attainable.

To be quite honest, I wrote this book because I am that parent. I share those dreams and fears. I have worried. I have prayed. I have cried. In the end, I have come to realize that as parents, we have a way forward. We do not have to live in the fear that we somehow won't raise our children the “right way”. We can move forward using many of the methods I learned through years of education and training in the world of scientific research. An interesting thing I discovered for myself during those years of research training is this: just because an action taken appears simple, does not mean that the responses to that action will be simple.

Just because an action taken appears simple, does not mean that the responses to that action will be simple.



In mathematics there is an algebraic property that reads: if  $A=B$  and  $B=C$ , then  $A=C$ . It turns out that this transitive property of equality is not always directly applicable in human systems; therefore, for human systems, I learned instead: if  $A=B$  and  $B=C$ , then  $A$  may or may not =  $B$  OR  $C$ ! In other words, many human actions by us as parents that result in the behaviors our children go on to learn and display are not linear; we usually cannot pinpoint actions we took that directly resulted in the learned behaviors of our children. In addition, we are not able to raise our children within the controlled laboratory environments with which I am quite familiar. You see, in laboratory settings we can tightly and specifically control the environment so that in some ways, we have a measure of control over the range of possible outcomes; not so in parenting. As parents, all our efforts are competing against every other imaginable input that may find its way to our precious children. And so, we react as any parent would: we attempt to erect barriers in a futile attempt to control the environment in which we raise our children. Of course, it seems to work...but only for a while. Sure, we have an enormous measure of control in those early parenting years. But then we realize that our children may not have really been learning the lessons we had been teaching. We begin to wonder if, just maybe, they have simply been showing us what we want to see until they are able to make their own choices. It is when our children begin to realize they can make their own choices (from an innocuous decision like which flavor of yogurt is their favorite, to divulging to us that they are being bullied, or have experienced teen dating violence) AND start exercising their autonomy, we parents fear all hell will break loose in the home. So, is there any way to avoid this worrisome situation?

This book is my contribution. Consider it your personal, pre-emptive strike against the daily onslaught of external attacks on the practice of parenting. I am certain *a more scientific approach to honest parenting* will work for you too. To be quite honest, I use my training as a scientist to inform as well as constantly and consistently improve my own parenting. I now offer these same *scientific approaches* and principles to each of you. However, I realize that the mention of the word science, scientific or scientist causes many people instinctively to think: “correct answers”, “difficult to understand”, and/or “smart people.” Contrary to this perception, at its core, the practice of science is founded on the principle of ordered processes. The creation and implementation of ordered processes is a universal phenomenon invoked since the beginning of time. The universe and everything in it, including you and me, exists and operates on this founding principle. Once you truly understand this, neither science nor *scientific approaches* will cause you apprehension; and, if you will allow yourself to accept the truth of this premise, I can help move you towards what I call “*honest parenting*.” This is my purpose as you're reading these pages.



As a scientist, I chose to search for parenting answers using the same *scientific approach* I apply to very complex biological questions. We scientists call it the reductionist method. After recognizing the complexity of the problem, I split it up into more manageable sub-components. I was then able to derive some key insights that I have used to guide me through raising my children. These methods and insights have a dynamic property which we refer to in science as being “fluid”. This means as our children grow and as we as parents grow, the insights and methods will change. This is an important and often overlooked point. Because we are dealing with complex human interactions among multiple people of differing age groups, parenting methods must constantly be chosen from among a variety of methods in the parenting “toolkit”. This may seem obvious on paper, but when you are in the thick of parenting, the thought of switching methods doesn't always immediately come to mind. One reason for this is that we as parents are not always tuned in to see the signs that our children now need a different *parenting approach*. Things were going along just fine, so we just kept on doing what had been working. As a scientist and a parent, I have learned that children almost always provide some clues when they need us to step outside our zones of comfort and employ a different approach.

As a responsible scientist and author, as well as a parent committed to the daily practice of these approaches, I must be upfront and present this disclaimer before we dive into the “good stuff”. **Disclaimer: My book will likely not address everything you're going to face as you move towards honest parenting.** Yes, you read that correctly. No book can do that, no matter what the authors tell you. It's simply not possible. What this book can and will do is provide you the beginnings of the road map you will need. I say beginnings because honest parenting is a personal, life-long journey between you, your children and God. My role here in this first book is simply to jump start the journey for some, provide redirection for many (hopefully), and for a few, offer a much-needed challenge to keep moving forward toward the parenting goals you have set.



**Honest parenting is a personal, life-long journey between you, your children and God.**

Along the way, I will introduce and explain key support tools you will find useful on your unique parenting journey.



Regardless of where you may start, my hope for every parent who reads this book is for you to be successful in your parenting journey. In fact, I NEED you to be successful for my own selfish reasons. To be quite honest, I want my own children to inherit a world they can understand and successfully navigate without fear...a world that feels honest and familiar to them. So, if or when my children ever meet your children, I want there to be no confusion about the correct ways to interact with other human beings. In order for that hope to be actualized, I believe every child needs to be raised in a way that affirms the dignity and worth of themselves and every other human being; and it is my unequivocal conviction that ***honest parenting*** guides each of our children towards those truths about each of us as members of the human race.



As we practice ***honest parenting***, we can confidently and proudly release them into this world, their world, knowing that they will prosper, they will achieve, they will overcome personal adversity, they will help others, they will support

community and they will honor humanity. As ***honest parents***, this is all we ever truly could want for our children and for this world over which God has appointed us stewards. Yet, make no mistake. If I can become an honest parent, then so can you and every other parent who will read this book. How can I make such a blanket and universally applicable claim? Two reasons. First of all, I believe each child is gifted uniquely to a set of “creators” by the Creator; secondly, either (or both) of those “creators” can accept their unique gift as confirmation of their worth, capacity, and commitment to ensure not only the survival, but the preparation of that child for human flourishing.

**Each child is gifted uniquely to a set of “creators” by the Creator.**

So, if you’re looking for an excuse to forgo the customary insecurities, guilt, inadequacies, and frustrations attendant with serious parenting, surely you have purchased the right text! From the very beginning, I intend to persuade each of you that you are not a bad parent. I need to be sure I make this point clearly, because I am going to insist that you adopt this opinion and mindset right now. Too many parents worry incessantly about what they are (or are not) doing for their children. I can totally relate to those all too familiar, self-tormenting thoughts and internal strife!!!



- Yes, there are decisions to be made.
- Yes, there are repercussions for misguided thinking or misguided actions.
- Yes, the world constantly judges us relative to the choices we as parents make for our children...but....

As a professionally trained scientist (my Ph.D. is in Microbiology and Molecular Genetics), I have spent all my formal education, teaching and research careers studying processes. I have been blessed to convert that expertise and apply it to parenting. In so doing, I am offering a new narrative about parenting, especially for first timers and millennials. I am particularly interested in having this conversation with these two populations because I suspect that compared to any other parenting generation, first-timers and millennials spend more hours of time doing online research, asking advice from seasoned parents, attending seminars, reading blog after blog, and yes, praying, praying...and praying. Guess what? That tells me two things: (1) you have a sincere understanding that you are a steward who has been given charge of God's most precious Creation. (1) our sincere understanding that we, i.e. parents, you are a steward who has been given charge of God's most precious Creation. And, (2) you genuinely accept that you are uniquely devoted to your children and your family unit. Now while there are no perfect parents just like there are no perfect people, I do urge you to consider that the practice of parenting your children can become more perfect if you approach it as a series of ever-evolving, fluid, and progressive experiences within one ordered process.

### **Approach parenting as a series of ever-evolving, fluid, and progressive experiences within one ordered process.**

Summarily, as you explore the pages of this book, I wholeheartedly believe that each of us can experience “*honest parenting*” because the word “parent” is both a verb AND a noun, i.e. carrying out the responsibilities of child-rearing and a person who is responsible for those collective actions. Taking into account both the noun and the verb, the “*scientific*” premise of my book is that in becoming an *honest parent* as well as in the long-term commitment to act responsibly as such, all of us will become more successful as we yield ourselves to what is an on-going, progressive and ordered process. Please keep reading, my fellow “scientists.”



## Introduction

## DEEPER DIVE DISCUSSION

### Prompt 1

Recall what you read on **page 2** that “Just because an action taken appears simple, does not mean that the responses to that action will be simple. In mathematics there is an algebraic property that reads:

if  $A=B$  and  $B=C$ , then  $A=C$ .

It turns out that this transitive property of equality is not always directly applicable in human systems; therefore, for human systems, I learned instead: if  $A=B$  and  $B=C$ , then  $A$  may or may not =  $B$  OR  $C$ !

a. Can you think of one or two examples in parenting your children when you witnessed “inequality,” i.e. when a “simple” action on YOUR part resulted in very complex, confusing or complicated responses from your child?

b. How about an instance where one of your children’s “simple” actions resulted in not so simple responses from you?



## DEEPER DIVE DISCUSSION

### Prompt 2

Go back and take a look at **page 2** where I wrote: However, I realize that the mention of the word science, scientific or scientist causes many people to instinctively think: “correct answers”, “difficult to understand”, and/or “smart people.” Contrary to this perception, at its core, the practice of science is founded on the principle of ordered processes. The creation and implementation of ordered processes is a universal phenomenon invoked since the beginning of time. The universe and everything in it, including you and me, exists and operates on this founding principle. Once you truly understand this, neither science nor scientific approaches will cause you apprehension; and, if you will allow yourself to accept the truth of this premise, I can help move you towards what I call “honest parenting.” This is my purpose as you’re reading these pages.

a. Be honest, do you think parents who are intimidated or reluctant about scientific processes can raise children who are STEM-friendly, naturally inquisitive, and confident learners when it comes to science? Why or why not?

b. Do you think that children whose parents can afford to purchase expensive tech toys for their children to play with and/or send them to expensive science camps are trying to earn some sort of “right of access” relative not only to the tools for learning science, but also to science as an economic enterprise? Why or why not?





## Identify Yourself With the “Ultimate Parent” Chapter 1

In addition to being an ordered process, **honest parenting is also a spiritual process**. Whether you have grown up within a religious framework or not, this is an inescapable truth. As a spiritual process, honest parenting is a product of our humanity, an acknowledgment that we, as humans (i.e. mere mortals) actually did not create this world into which we were born. Given this truth, we all face (whether willingly or unwillingly) the realization that there are processes in each of our lives over which we have no control. We see examples of our lack of control all around us: day turns to night and back to day again; the winds blow; the rains come; birds take flight; cows graze; fish spawn; spiders spin their intricate webs; moles burrow tunnels underneath the earth (including our well-manicured lawns) even while that once beautiful fence around the backyard rots, decays and moves into a state of disrepair; ants find their way to crumbs unintentionally left behind after a birthday party as friends and family who share in those annual celebrations live and die just like seasons change.

Approaching this inevitability of change can encourage personal enlightenment, provoke public anxiety and usher in a powerful, humbling spirit all at the same time. These are natural responses to a process at work in each of our lives, for all of our lives. We have to learn to live in harmony with change. Every attempt to fight the process leads only to confusion and disappointment.

**When we fight change, we are working against God’s power to heal. When we instead relinquish ourselves to change, we relinquish ourselves to God.**

At that point, we have harnessed the template, the “game plan”, for practicing honest parenting: a willingness to relinquish our instinctive desire to control. Once we agree with God that our desire to control stands in the way of the practice of ***honest parenting***, we then begin to participate in the ordered, spiritual process more effectively. I know this seems counterintuitive: by letting go, we actually gain. Yes, it’s true! We



become open to allowing the power of The Divine to literally direct our thoughts and control our actions. We become sensitive not only to our relationship with God, but also to our relationship with our children. Now we can see them, but with God's eyes. We can hear their frustrations, but through God's ears. We can partner in their learning, growth and development, but using God's hands. We begin to parent honestly, because we have stepped out of the way and allowed God to remove our human desire for control. Now we can approach our children with the same childlike sense of wonder and amazement for life that they bring to every situation they encounter. We can be present and, in the moment, as they naturally reveal themselves to us day after day, hour after hour, moment after glorious moment. They trust us...because we have finally let go!

By insisting that honest parenting is a spiritual process, I do not intend to engage in an expansive discussion about the merits of religion; nor am I proposing any ability or desire to place one religion above another. Those are discussions for someone other than me, at a time other than now, in a place other than here. Whatever your religious path, I do offer you this: the reality of The Divine does not need anyone's affirmation...certainly not mine. For that reason, I can assure you that honest parenting is a spiritual process without forcing particular beliefs upon you or dictating what you ought to believe. I cannot offer you a faith formula. I can only tell you, however, that the practice of ***honest parenting*** which we explore in this book is rooted in a belief in The Divine. For me, without this rootedness, i.e., foundation, it is difficult to work expectantly towards many of the parenting goals we seek to achieve. There simply is no other option for me other than to approach ***honest parenting*** as a spiritual process. The truth is that I have tried living other ways besides or beyond a life of religious faith. None of them have worked for me to be quite honest. So, ***as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*** (Joshua 24:15).

I suppose you could argue I have an advantage. I grew up in a religious household. In fact, I am the son of a Baptist minister. Until his retirement, my father pastored one of the largest, Black Baptist churches in my hometown; and, so my siblings and I grew up "in the church." Although as an adult, I explored many different religious doctrines, I have settled in my mind, body and spirit that the Christian faith is where I rest my hope. In your own spiritual practice of ***honest parenting***, you too will have to make your own choice. It is the most important decision of your life here on earth. The decision you make as to whether or not you will submit to a Higher Power to govern your life will determine your ability to be effective with practicing anything that I write about ***honest parenting***. Full stop.



**The decision you make as to whether or not you will submit to a Higher Power to govern your life will determine your ability to parent honestly.**



A personal example here may be of use. I take my kids to the local children’s museum periodically. I had never really given the outing much thought in terms practicing *honest parenting*. We always had a good time, so no need to do anything differently, right? Well, our most recent trip started off the same as any of our previous trips. First you lay the ground rules: “no running (they’ll run anyway), watch out for other kids (kids bump into each other dad, get over it), stay where I can see you (right dad...aren’t you watching us?)”. Then, it’s tickets, wristbands and they’re off!! I make a mental note of the time and begin the countdown to wrapping up the fun and heading home. But this time was different. God had a different “game plan” for me. It was simple, yet immensely effective. Somehow, God opened my eyes to see the wonderment in theirs as they approached and interacted with the exhibits. My job became to let go. Stop trying to control how long to stay, which exhibit to explore, how to interact with this or with that, even which children to interact with. Instead, I just observed. It was absolutely amazing to watch them! The excitement when THEY “figured it out”; the curiosity and timidity with which they approached unknown situations; the opportunities they boldly took to make friends with other children they didn’t know in order to play and explore together; their periodic need to look around for me...not necessarily to ask for my help...just for reassurance that I was nearby and whatever they were currently engaged in was ok with me. This is the type of relationship with our children that promotes *honest parenting*. Because now they become open books and we as parents can then use the information they provide us to make positive, impactful decisions on how best to engage and parent them honestly. Our children begin to willingly give us the information we need in order to understand them. It is in the “understanding” of our children that effective, *honest parenting* can thrive.



When we give up our natural instinct to intervene and control, we give our children the “green light” to show us exactly who they are; who they are becoming.



When we give up our natural instinct to intervene and control, we give our children the “green light” to show us exactly who they are; who they are becoming. This is golden folks. This is the core information we need in order to do our jobs effectively. Our children have a natural instinct to give us this information. They want us to know. They long to tell us...if we would simply let go, and then listen, trusting the nature of this ordered process.

I need to focus your attention, however, for just a moment on the word “trust.” From a Christian (and Jewish) religious perspective, trust is only bested by love. Trust is action oriented. Trust is where we have to put in work and effort. Trust requires both knowledge and desire on our part. Thankfully, God provides us with access to both. But we have to reach out our hand and ask for them. God does not force these gifts of love on us. God waits for us to recognize what we need and acknowledge to ourselves and to God that we are not able to provide it for ourselves. That's when the magic can happen!! It turns out that the trust we learn to place in God, the willingness and need to trust God becomes our template for developing the sensitivities and patience we need to practice ***honest parenting***. I know of no way to begin to accomplish ***honest parenting*** without having made a commitment to trust in God.

**The trust we learn to place in God, the willingness and need to trust God becomes our template for developing the sensitivities and patience we need to practice ***honest parenting***.**

Here's another reason why this step is so crucial. ***Honest parenting*** will require admitting you don't know something. It will require having discussions with your children without having all the answers. It will require showing your weaknesses and shortcomings. It will require ....



believing situations will resolve themselves while not knowing how or when. In those moments of wrestling with the unknown, children have a unique ability to discern truth. They seem to just know. We can put on a wonderful show and convince ourselves and other adults around us that we've got the answers, but the pure honesty of a child will always call our bluff. Our children are counting on us to parent from a place of honesty. For them, it's the only framework that makes sense. So, it's easy for them to learn and grow in an environment that celebrates and infuses honest living.

Let me end this section by asking that you meditate regularly on these three key words that should guide each of us not only in ***honest parenting***, but in life: **trust**, **hope** and **love**. Let's take it a step further and make this meditation real. I want you to think of a situation where you know it has been your practice to exert control. Just to be clear here, you may need to ask your partner, a close friend or a trusted relative to tell you where you exert control...you may not be aware of it, or you may not be willing to admit it to yourself. But once you have identified the situation, I want you to say very simply this:

**“God, stop me from controlling this situation.  
God, remove from me the desire to control this situation.  
Now God, show me what I’ve been missing by  
attempting to control this situation.”**

Repeat this simple prayer three times, slowly. I want you to focus on the words you are saying the first time through the prayer. Focus on each word; emphasize the word(s) that seem to speak particularly to you in this moment. As you repeat this prayer the second time, I want you to feel more and more that this is truly your desire. Begin to ask and answer these questions:

- **Why have I felt the need to control this situation?**
- **What will I gain by letting go?**
- **What might I lose if I continue trying to control this situation?**

The third and final time you repeat this prayer, I want you to visualize yourself in the situation, but having no desire to control the situation...none. See yourself moving effortlessly through the situation, allowing The Divine who knows all and loves all to be. See yourself telling yourself,



**“This situation is happening just as God intends, and that’s enough. I don’t need to add anything to nor take anything from it”.**

Now, go on with your day. When the situation you prayed and meditated on eventually presents itself, remember your agreement with yourself and with God. Sit back and watch what unfolds. You have now become a personal witness to the awesome freedom that can be enjoyed when we shift our focus away from control and towards understanding.

Be amazed and thank God!



## Chapter 1

### DEEPER DIVE DISCUSSION

#### Prompt 1

Which conversation would be easier for an *honest parent* of a six or seven-year old: (1) explaining where babies come from? OR (2) explaining whether or not you believe in God?

a. What about for an *honest parent* of an 11-year old?

b. Does the sex of the child matter?

c. What other variable(s) would an *honest parent* consider in approaching each of those conversations?



## DEEPER DIVE DISCUSSION

### Prompt 2

In what ways do your responses to the first question connect to the ways you were parented and/or your own childhood experiences?

### Prompt 3

Why is it important for *honest parents* to be aware of and “own” connections to our childhoods?





## Chapter 2

# Observe Who They Are Becoming (and, go with)

Much of life is about choices. The sooner we can bring our children into that mindset, the sooner they will begin the process of becoming. "Becoming what", you ask? Well, whatever and whomever they have been purposed to become. You and I actually have little control over that final outcome. It has been predestined. Our role as parents is to guide them into their path and introduce them to various tools they will need in order to continue on that path toward becoming. So, here's my question.

**How in the world are they going to discover that sense of purpose and discover those tools if we are not being honest in our parenting?**

Yes: **Honest Parenting**. This is crucial, so let's take this in steps...similar to the Scientific Method I used every day in my research laboratory.

First, I need to briefly define a concept called "behavior modeling." In corporate America, one of the best methods for training employees, especially staff who interact with customers, is through interactive role-play or behavior modeling. Although sometimes it is challenging to recreate scenarios that accurately depict real-world situations, still many companies have come to rely on this type of training for workforce development. In this chapter, I have connected the training method of behavior modeling to scenarios I believe will lead to behavioral modification, producing what I hope is a compelling tool which you can reference to practice honest parenting.

Now, I'll set the stage with a scenario for us to work from. I'm sure we can all relate to this. Your children have made it home from school. They have had a quick snack and tackled the remainder of the day's homework. They have decided it's time for free play and you have no objection. You have been staying on top of the types of toys they have available, so you allow them to pick and choose as they wish. You also regularly check in on what they are watching on television and YouTube® as well as the types of games they play on their tablet devices. You are feeling pretty darn good



about your parenting skills and your level of organization. As you begin to relax for a bit, shouting breaks out in the house. Your children have a disagreement about what to watch on YouTube® and emotions have reached a boiling point. "I just sat down for some quiet time!", you think to yourself. Immediately you can feel your anger level rising. This situation is ripe for something explosive. So, how do we choose honest parenting in this type of situation? What can we do to not only diffuse this situation, but harness the energy of the moment and channel it towards behavioral modification? Let me provide a tentative solution and then we will break it down into its component parts...same way we'd approach this problem in the laboratory.

Here's a proposed solution that embraces ***honest parenting*** and uses behavior modeling: You call each child (by first name) to you and away from the location of the disagreement. This first action should immediately lower the tension among the children because you have briefly removed them from the conflict environment. Next, in a calm tone you begin the process of allowing each child to explain to you the nature of the conflict. Do not allow one child to interrupt the other; everyone will get a turn.

**Once everyone has explained the conflict as they saw it, you as a parent must distill this information and say to them what you understand the conflict to be.**

Now the children begin to see that you are listening to them. They start to see that you are concerned about the conflict, you wish to understand better the underlying reason(s) for the conflict and you want to help them resolve the conflict without shouting at each other. At this point, you may be tempted to provide a solution. Resist that temptation. Instead, ask each child what THEY believe a reasonable solution should look like. You may likely get some unusual responses; especially if they are not used to being asked their opinion. Still, stick with it. You may also be surprised to get some very creative solutions. Continue along until a reasonable number (your discretion here) of solutions have been proposed. Now you all need to roll up your sleeves, evaluate each solution against the next and give the children an opportunity to express their thoughts about each proposed solution. By now, the children will likely have settled on a solution by themselves. But if not, go ahead and point out strengths and weaknesses of each proposed solution. Push them to choose a solution that everyone can agree to abide by. During this process, you may see your children moving towards a solution that you would not have chosen. This is ok. Let them choose the solution they are comfortable with and can agree to abide by. Once they have made this decision, they have owned the conflict and the solution. Thank them for coming to an agreement, repeat



the agreement reached and let them shake on it. What you have just done is facilitated behavioral modification by using a training method called behavior modeling. In fact, the method as well as the process you used navigated your children through a real-time problem. In doing so, your children were the actors in their own conflict resolution scenario!

Importantly, as you continue to employ behavior modeling and behavioral modification as an honest parenting tool, you will notice that your children will instinctively begin to solve conflicts as they arise using the corporate training skills you've taught them!



## I. Model Honest Living

Let's first agree that truth is the goal what we want to achieve and that there are positive and negative indicators we can look out for to guide us toward that goal. Truth, however, has become something of a dirty word today's U.S. culture. We all can point to example after example of untruthful adult behavior. This is nothing new. What many parents do not realize is that the degree of technology integration among today's millennials and generation Z has absolutely produced something that is new. Our children are able to access the world within the palm of their hand! Let that sink in for just a moment. This is what we as parents are fighting against...and many of us don't have a game plan for this reality. We have to understand that our parenting efforts are being diluted in ways that previous parenting generations did not have to deal with. So, today's untruthful behaviors are being circulated and amplified within our children's social circles at exponential rates. In this context, we have to use parenting methods that not only counteract examples of dishonesty, but also amplify those truthful behavior models in a similarly exponential fashion. How can we approach this task? It must be done using a....



deliberate, repeatable strategy. The ideas and methods we'll now take a closer look at are foundational, so they must constantly be attended to throughout the formative parenting years (which is birth through about 6yrs).

Now let's be clear, I cannot teach you honesty. We each are born with that moral compass, even if we didn't receive honest parenting ourselves. We all have Divine Spirit within that nudges us towards Truth.



So, if you are having any difficulties accessing your honest self, I need to make some suggestions here for you. Firstly, renew your relationship with God. I cannot stress this enough. We as parents are simply stewards of these divine gifts of God called children. The life's work of being a parent really starts from within. I am going to ask some things of you throughout these chapters that will require you to make honest assessments of situations. In my opinion, neither you nor I can truly decide those honest assessments. That Eternal Truth is God-ordained and God-inspired. You may be able to get by, but at some point, you will begin to experience challenges for which you will feel completely unprepared to handle. As Thomas Paine penned, "These are the times that try men's [and women's] souls". As you build your personal faith walk, you can, at the same time, incorporate parenting ideas presented in this book. Please do not make the mistake of believing you have to "get yourself right first". It's the process that matters more. The destination will be finalized by your Higher Power.



Additionally, I encourage you to find and participate regularly in an activity that promotes solitude. I can virtually guarantee you that in your personal solitude time with God, you will be practicing the surrendering of control required for Honest Parenting. Here are a few examples of ways to access personal solitude: yoga, writing in a journal, walking, jogging or cycling, fishing, gardening, drawing, painting, sewing, etc. Of course, this list is in no way exhaustive. The point is to find something to do on a regular basis (at least twice per week) that will allow you to clear your mind of the day-to-day routines of living our lives. It doesn't have to be long... twenty to thirty minutes is plenty. During this time, you've now created a dedicated space for what is called "self-reflection". This is the space from which God speaks to us. This is where you will find your center. This is where you will learn Truth in your life and begin to live in that Truth.

**As soon as you have begun the process of becoming a more honest version of yourself, you will almost automatically begin to notice things about your children.**

How they respond differently depending on how you approach them, what motivates them to do what you want them to do, what chores they will do without any request from you, their likes and dislikes, their secret dreams.

These are the worlds of our children we as parents need to be able to move in and out of seamlessly. When we become honest with ourselves, we have boldly and fearlessly moved closer to the next step: deliberately and repetitively replacing untruthfulness within our children's daily living with truthful, honest living.

**When we become *honest* with ourselves, we boldly, fearlessly deliberately and repetitively replace untruthfulness within our children's daily living with truthful, *honest* living.**

You will have to model this to your children. Yes, you will have to lead by example. This is the essence of *honest parenting*. Once you're aware of and responsive to God's direction in your life, you can then model that honest living among your children.





## BEHAVIORAL MODEL

### II. MAKE NOTES OF THE CHANGES YOU SEE

As you have more and more honest interactions with your children, you will begin to notice them open up, share more details, ask more questions...they will begin to display the same honest behaviors towards you that you have been faithfully modeling towards them. Please, please, please...make some sort of record of what you are observing as you continue to engage your children. In science, many of our greatest discoveries have come about not because we as scientists were so smart, but because we kept a detailed record of what we saw during our observations. Scientists, in fact, are meticulous when it comes to data collection. Many of us say it is our "bread and butter"! Again, this is foundational and cannot be overlooked. Each child is unique and will respond in unique ways. If you are deliberate early on in recognizing and documenting these responses, it will become second nature for you to determine the approach for a particular child in a particular set of circumstances. In those instances when you find yourself struggling with how to approach a certain situation, you will have a treasure trove of solid, reliable data on that particular child which you can reference.

Visualization is an important tool to the scientist. Charts, graphs, tables and diagrams help us to see data we've collected in new ways. We regularly use visualization tools to help us spot trends and make predictions based on underlying patterns. I want to help you to bring this same power of visualization to ***honest parenting***. So, I'm going to present you an example here that we can pick apart together. Ready? Let's get to it.



# Insert visual and provide explanation







### III. Evaluate, Integrate, Replicate

These last series of steps should ideally be accomplished one after the other in rapid succession. You don't want too much time to pass between each of these three steps. The reason for combining these will become apparent the more you practice. In a nutshell, we are now at the point of taking action. Here is where all of our efforts pay huge dividends. First, we make conclusions based on the data we have just visualized. Then we take action in light of those conclusions. Finally, we return to observation mode and repeat.



The complete cycle turns into a feedback loop. As scientists, we absolutely love a well-designed feedback loop and here's why: feedback loops are powerful tools to refine and reinforce systems. Once the loop is set, you can run the model continuously. For you as a parent, this means you can use the feedback loop approach to exponentially amplify the positive behaviors you desire. Now, you have a powerful tool of your own to counteract the social media onslaught your children are exposed to daily.

Remember, you must continuously evaluate, integrate then replicate. Evaluate whether or not you are getting the desired outcomes with the approaches you are currently using. If the answer is yes, move on to integration. If the answer is no, simply choose a different approach for that situation and with that particular child. Remember, every child is unique. It's ok to not get the approach correct the first time, or the second, or even the third in most cases. Children are very forgiving. They reward loving effort more than anything. They will love you through those early failures, so long as they see your honest effort. Usually, they will end up meeting you halfway. Integration will be fairly intuitive at this point. Simply continue to model those behaviors that are giving positive results, i.e., replicate.

One thing to note here: you must work to become consistent. Resist the temptation to cut corners on this one, folks. It may get somewhat annoying to us as adults, but our children need to see us repeat the same behaviors under similar circumstances. They use these nonverbal cues to reinforce those connections to the Truth being hard-wired into them by God, through our parenting. Wow!

**Our intentional consistency is the "secret sauce" that God uses to exponentially amplify every Truth we teach our children as they go about the business of "hiding these words in their hearts, so that they may not sin against God."  
(Psalm 119:11)**

Through the faithful practice of consistency, we help our children to establish their own framework for recognizing, evaluating and responding to Truth. Once our children feel comfortable working from that place of Truth, they will instinctively run to it when engaged in problem-solving throughout their lives. This becomes our enduring gift to our children. Now, let's take a closer look at how practicing consistency can both support and enhance *honest parenting*.



A photograph of a family of four (mother, father, and two children) looking at a tablet together. The mother is on the left, the father is on the right, and two children are in the center. They are all looking down at a tablet held by the father. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting.

## Chapter 2

### DEEPER DIVE DISCUSSION

#### Prompt 1

**My primary premise in this chapter was this statement on [page 14](#):  
How in the world are they going to discover that sense of purpose and  
discover those tools if we are not being honest in our parenting?**

**a. If you buy that, let me ask you this: when we are NOT being honest,  
would that mean we are being dishonest?**

**b. Is dishonest parenting really an option in today's world?**



## DEEPER DIVE DISCUSSION

### Prompt 2

By now, you must know that *honest parenting* isn't for wimps, chumps, or scary cats! The level of self-reflection alone is enough reason to run and hide, right! Confront my true self? Are you insane? LOL.

a. But, let me ask you: does the “science” I am teaching you help at all? That is to say, can you see benefits to using a scientific approach as a way to guide you in becoming MORE objective and less emotive when it comes to peeling back layers so you can evolve as an *honest parent*?

b. If so, in what ways and how?

c. If approaching self-reflection using a science-based approach still leaves you “stuck” in defeating thoughts, why/how/in what ways do you believe use of the scientific method fails to guide and inform your experience(s) with self-reflection?