

A BOOKLET EXCERPT



**5 Ways**  
to Exalt  
**God Only**  
in Your Family

An Excerpt from the Book

**LEAD**  
**YOUR FAMILY**  
**LIKE JESUS**

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**FOCUS**  
ON  
THE FAMILY

## **Five Ways to Not Edge God Out of Your Family**

An excerpt from *Lead Your Family Like Jesus: Powerful Parenting Principles from the Creator of Families*

by Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges, and Tricia Goyer

“The righter she sounded, the madder I got.”

That’s the best way to describe what happened whenever my wife, Jane, and I spoke about the failing investment I’d poured our funds into when our kids were young. In my heart of hearts, I’d suspected I didn’t know what I was doing when I got into the investment game. I must admit that, in addition to providing financial security for our family, I wanted to show Jane and our friends that I was a player in the game of wise investing.

In his book *Search for Significance*, Robert S. McGee noted that if Satan has a formula for self-worth, it includes buying into this idea: “Your self-worth equals your performance plus the opinion of others.” This certainly could be applied to my attitude regarding my investment.

When the deal started to sour, trying to save it required additional money. I bullied Jane into committing more funds, instead of confronting my own loss of self-esteem and fear of failure.

After months of avoiding this landmine subject, Jane finally asked me if I’d prayed about it. My quick answer: “No!”

She then asked a second question that stopped me in my tracks. “Why not?”

Even though I’d been raised in a Christian home and continued to attend church regularly, it took me time to figure out the answer. Finally I realized three reasons I hadn’t prayed about my finances.

First, it didn’t seem right to bother God with my investment problems. They seemed so trivial compared to the kinds of things I thought were worthy of calling to God’s attention, like a major illness or global problems such as the AIDS pandemic, natural disasters, and wars.

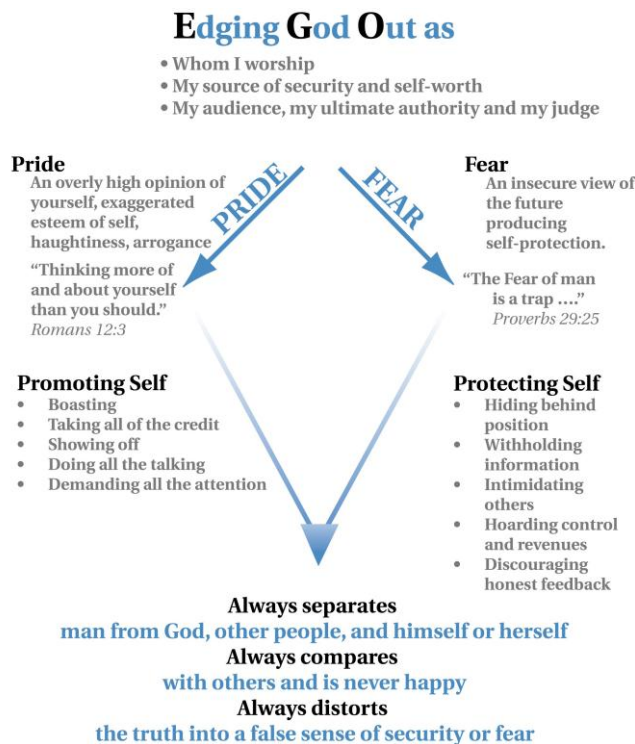
Second, I didn’t pray because I didn’t have a lot of faith in the process. The best way to describe my concept of prayer at the time was that it was like tying my

requests onto strings of helium balloons and letting them go. I had little confidence they'd ever be answered.

Third, I told myself I could take care of the problem myself. Belief in God and in Jesus Christ had always been part of my life, but I'd let pride, self-promotion, fear, and self-protection edge God out as the source of my security and sufficiency. I'd isolated myself from His help.

You might say I had an EGO problem—with EGO standing for Edging God Out.

A diagram explaining my problem would have looked this way:



### From Pride to Peace

When my investments were failing, I felt defeated—and isolated from my wife and children. At this low point in my life, God showed up in the pages of an unlikely book. It had a pretty macho title: *Disciplines of the Beautiful Woman*.

Skimming its pages, I came across a Bible quotation: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present

your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

I suppose I’d read these words before. But this time they hit me between the eyes. The one that drilled into my soul was *anything*. In an instant I realized that there was nothing that troubled me that God didn’t want to hear about. That included my shaky investment. I was convinced that He would answer my prayer, no matter how puny it was.

So I humbled myself, got on my knees, and talked to God about my problem. I asked Him for the peace He promised. With words of surrender I gave up my problem to God, and at that moment I experienced a feeling like warm water pouring over my soul. I felt a peace that truly transcended all understanding, just as God had promised.

When Jane and the kids came home, she looked at me, bewildered. “What happened to you?” she asked.

I guess the change that God had made in my heart had started to show on my face.

This began the process by which I started leading my family in its faith journey. I wish I could tell you that the investment made a miraculous turnaround, and I was able to retire early on the proceeds. That didn’t happen. I lost the money, but I found something of far greater value: the peace that surpasses all understanding—through prayer and the promises of God.

### **The Example of Jesus**

When it comes to humility, Jesus was truly the Master. You’ve probably heard about the time when, despite His heavenly credentials, He washed his followers’ dirty feet. You probably know the story. The disciples realized how shocking this was. Peter protested, then relented. “Then [Jesus] said, “Do you understand what I have done to you? You address me as ‘Teacher’ and ‘Master,’ and rightly so. That is what I am. So if I, the Master and Teacher, washed your feet, you must now wash each other’s feet. I’ve laid down a pattern for you. What I’ve done, you do. I’m only pointing out the obvious. A servant is not ranked above his master; an employee doesn’t give orders

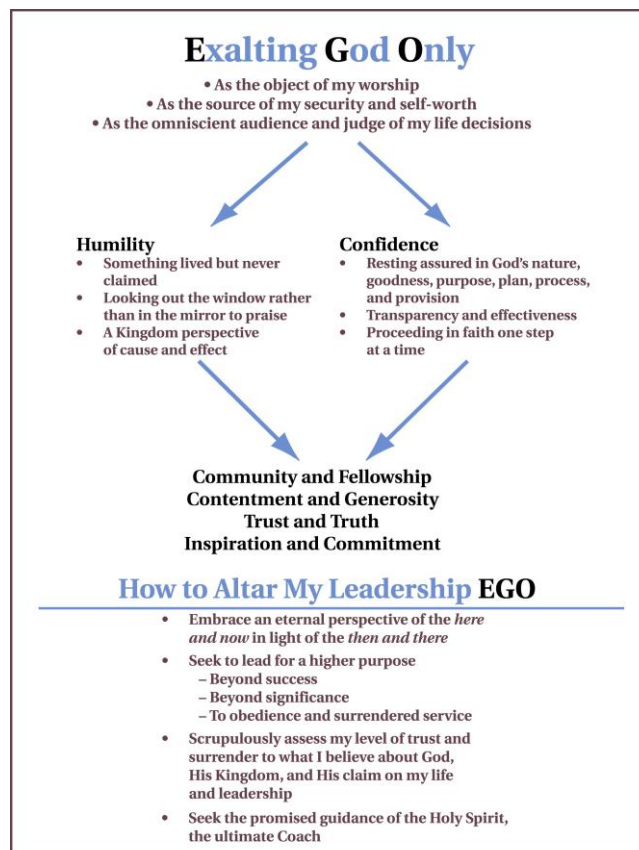
to the employer. If you understand what I'm telling you, act like it—and live a blessed life" (John 13:3-17, MSG).

Any time we pay more attention to our own pride or egos, we're worshiping ourselves rather than God. We need to think of ourselves less. Jesus was our perfect example. He worshiped God in prayer. He pointed those around Him to God. He followed God's commands. He depended on God the Father as His source for everything—including His self-esteem and security.

Jesus repeatedly affirmed *whose He was* and *who He was*. He determined that He would live by the mission His father had given Him for the accomplishment of His Father's purpose. Jesus could have been prideful; He was the Son of God. He could have been fearful; all the powers of darkness were against Him. Instead, in all these situations, Jesus chose the will of His Father. He chose to lead by serving.

Everything Jesus did was about the other kind of EGO—Exalt God Only. It was an act of worship, of giving reverent honor to God. Here's a diagram that shows how

we can "altar our egos" and Exalt God Only:



The Son of God doesn't have an EGO problem. Too often we do—suspecting we don't have all the answers as parents, but not wanting anyone—even God—to tell us what to do or how to live.

### **Five Ideas for Exalting God Only**

What can we do to turn our Edging God Out problem into an Exalting God Only pattern as leaders of our families? Here are five suggestions.

1. *Identify times when pride and fear are likely to pop up.* Both can stem from comparison; we're either comparing our kids to other kids, or comparing ourselves to other parents. Sometimes we even compare our "real selves" with the ideal person we want to be.

Think ahead to upcoming events that may bring out pride or fear. Think through how you'll handle each situation by trusting God.

Here's an example: the parent-teacher conference. You may find yourself fearing your child isn't up to the level of other kids. Or you may find out your child is a top student—inflating your pride. Instead of letting either emotion taking the front seat, go expecting that your child will have areas that need improvement. Go with an open heart, willing to learn and grow as a parent.

How about other situations that might bring fear or pride? Here are a few more:

- The playground, where your toddler can't keep up with the other kids
- The soccer game, where your son or daughter sits on the bench more than he or she plays
- When your child gets the best math score in class
- When she's the talk of the talent show

Think of these as opportunities to turn to God for wisdom and strength. He can help you focus on Him—and what's best for your child. If possible, turn to your spouse to talk through and pray about your pride and fear. What might usually

cause you to pull away from your spouse or child could be God's way of bringing you together!

2. *Remember whose you are and who you are.* To help you avoid pride and fear, you must answer two critical questions:

- Whose am I?
- Who am I?

The first question deals with choosing the primary authority and audience for your life. In other words, who are you trying to please? Leaders often demonstrate whose they are by how they define success. Many people think it has to do with earthly power and position, as well as the opinions of others. But Scripture teaches us that ultimately we're created to please God. There's no pride in that. In the family leadership arena, you first have to choose whether or not you will please God.

The second question—"Who am I?"—deals with your life purpose. Why did the Lord put you on earth? What does He want to do through you?

Scripture teaches that true success is the fulfillment of the life-mission God planned for you. It's that amazing. You have no need for pride or fear when success depends on your relationship with Christ and the level of control you let Him have. Are you willing to surrender all to Him and live as He would have you live—as a servant, rather than serving yourself?

3. *Take the "So That" test.* How can you know whether pride or fear is motivating your actions? Weigh your decision using the "So That" test. State why you want to choose a particular action. For example, you might say, "We're looking at putting our child in private school *so that* he has a better education."

Now follow that train of thought four more times:

- "We want him to have a better education *so that* he'll do better on test scores."
- "We want him to do better on test scores *so that* he'll be more appealing to colleges."

- “We want him to be more appealing to colleges *so that* he’ll get more scholarships.”
- “We want him to get more scholarships *so that* we’ll have less college tuition to pay.”

Going through this process can help you identify some reasons you might not otherwise admit—like, “We’re considering private school so that we’ll be respected in our community” (pride), or, “We want him to do better on test scores so that we won’t look like failures to the other parents” (fear).

Of course, this only works if you’re honest.

4. *Give up control and let God be your guide.* The natural outcome of deciding to please God—as well as turning over control of your life to Him—is a transformed perspective. If you resist pleasing God or giving Him control, your gaze will remain inward and focused on self. If you live to please God and put Him in charge, your view will be transformed to one that’s outward, filled with God-given confidence—and that leads you to humility and a life of service.

As you surrender control, look to the Lord for guidance. In our fear of looking foolish, we often avoid seeking wisdom from others, including God. Follow the instructions we were taught as kids about crossing the street: “Stop, look and listen!” Listen with an open mind to God and to those affected by your decisions. If I’d been more open to Jane’s intuition regarding my investment adventure, my lesson in humility might not have been so costly. Listen to those who see things from a different point of view.

Seeking God’s direction in family life is not only a built-in safeguard against dysfunction, it’s a practical expression of worship that will keep you in the peace that transcends all understanding. It requires stopping to ask God for directions, looking for warning signs that you may be on a pride-and-fear EGO trip, and listening for His “still, small voice.”

Edging God Out separates us from Him, from others, and from knowing the true selves He designed us to be. Instead, we need to invite God in and allow Him to work in and through us.



5. *Trust Him.* Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the Lord.” When we take one step in doing what we know we should, the rest becomes easier as God takes our hand and guides us. As you can guess, pride and fear are *not* invited on the journey.

This is often easier said than done. But it’s the *doing* that proves the *trusting*. It happens in family crises like these:

- When the bills appear bigger than your income, trust in God by acknowledging that He is your Provider. He will supply what you need—not always what you want. He promises to take care of His children.

- When the doctor says your child has a health problem, trust God by calling on Him as the ultimate Healer. Even as you seek medical advice, pray specifically through each step. Encourage and exhibit God-grounded confidence that God will work everything for good, as Romans 8:28 says.

- When your child struggles in school, trust God by asking Him for help and “owning” your part of the solution. Keep your pride and fear out of the way by collaborating with teachers in serving the best interest of your child. See your child and yourself as works-in-progress, giving and receiving grace. Remember who, and whose, both of you are—and what Jesus pledged:

“If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don’t you think he’ll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I’m trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with *getting*, so you can respond to God’s *giving*. People who don’t know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don’t worry about missing out. You’ll find all your everyday concerns will be met.

“Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don’t get worked up about what may or may not

happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.” (Matthew 6:30-34, MSG)

### **Putting God First in Your Parenting**

Leading like Jesus means leading your family with humility—avoiding the pride and fear that cause us to Edge God Out. Humility is an attitude that reflects a keen understanding of our limitations. *People with humility don't think less of themselves; they just think of themselves less.* That grows out of having confidence in God.

When we replace our tendency to Edge God Out with Exalting God Only, we influence our kids in a way that points them to Christ. The trickle-down effect on our children is profound. Even after we're gone, our influence will be seen in the ones God has entrusted to our care. A bit of us will live on—not only in the looks of our children, but in their behavior, too. You'll leave a positive legacy for your children, their children, and their children's children.

### **The Four Domains**

Leading your family like Jesus, you learn to align four leadership domains: your heart, your head, your hands, and your habits.

**Heart:** *The character and the values* you employ as you lead and influence your children. Leading like Jesus as a parent is first a spiritual matter. Whenever you have an opportunity to influence the thinking and behavior of other family members, the first question you have to answer is, “Am I motivated by self-interest or by the betterment of those I'm leading?”

**Head:** *Your viewpoint and beliefs* about leading and influencing your children. Your motives and intent start in the *heart*, then travel through the *head*, where you store your beliefs about parenting. Clarifying your vision and direction is vitally important—and shows how to get your family headed on the right path toward its primary purpose.

**Hands:** *What you actually do* when leading and influencing your children.

Family members will experience what's in your *heart* and *head* when your motivations and beliefs about parenting affect your *hands*—your actions. If as a parent you live out a servant heart and a servant-leadership point of view, you'll become a performance coach.

**Habits:** *How you continually refocus your desire* to lead and influence your children as Jesus would have you do. Your *habits* are the ways you review, replenish and act on your daily commitment as a parent to serve rather than being served. They include solitude, prayer, studying and applying Scripture, accepting God's unconditional love, involvement in supportive relationships, and what might be the greatest of all parenting habits: forgiveness and grace.

When these four areas align, leading becomes a joy—and you and your family enjoy feelings of safety, security, and satisfaction. When these areas are out of alignment, dissatisfaction and distrust result.

### **To Lead Is to Serve**

What person—living or dead—has most influenced your thinking, behavior, and path in life? Was it your mother? Your father? A coach? A teacher?

The person you just named was a leader in your life, regardless of his or her formal title. If, as most people do, you named a family member or friend, you can see that leaders with titles and positions of authority make up only part of the leadership landscape.

Why? Because leadership is an influence process. In fact: ***Any time you seek to influence the thinking, behavior, or development of people in their personal or professional lives, you take on the role of a leader.***

When you think about it this way, all of us are leaders in every aspect of life. That is why most leadership that shapes us doesn't come from those with boxes on an organizational chart; it comes from those we encounter in everyday life. That's the focus of the book *Lead Your Family Like Jesus*: your role as a leader in your family. The truth is, being a parent is probably the most important life-role

leadership position you'll ever have. Yet most people have no training or framework to help them be the best parents possible.

*Lead Your Family Like Jesus* helps to help change that. It shows how Jesus' example and teachings two thousand years ago apply to the busy lives of ordinary moms and dads today. By looking at Jesus, you can learn how to build a loving relationship with your children and extended family—no matter how you were raised and no matter what challenges your family faces.

The good news is that there's a perfect leadership role model you can trust. His name is Jesus. All families matter to Him. The big question is, does Jesus matter in your family?

***To find out more, please visit:***

***[www.focusonthefamily.com/LeadYourFamily](http://www.focusonthefamily.com/LeadYourFamily)***