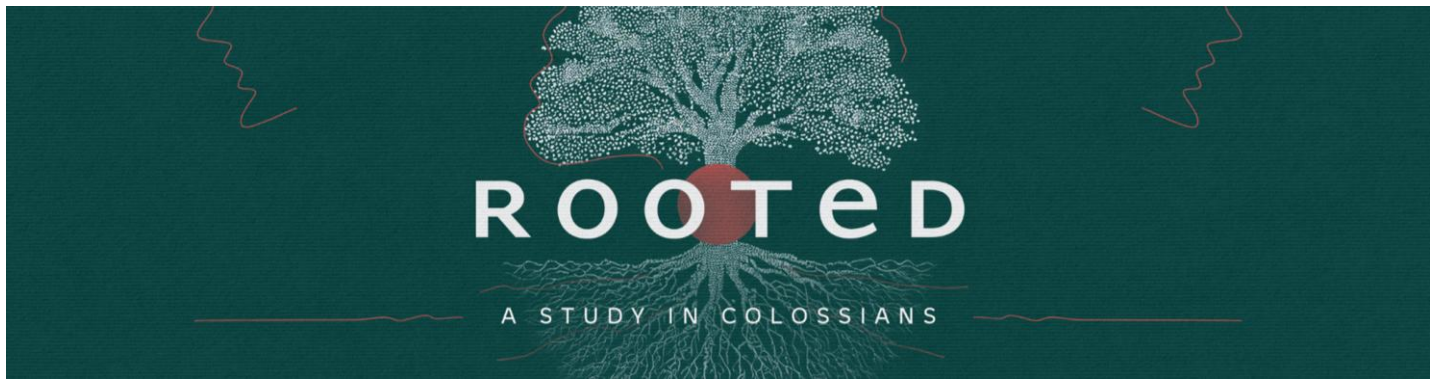




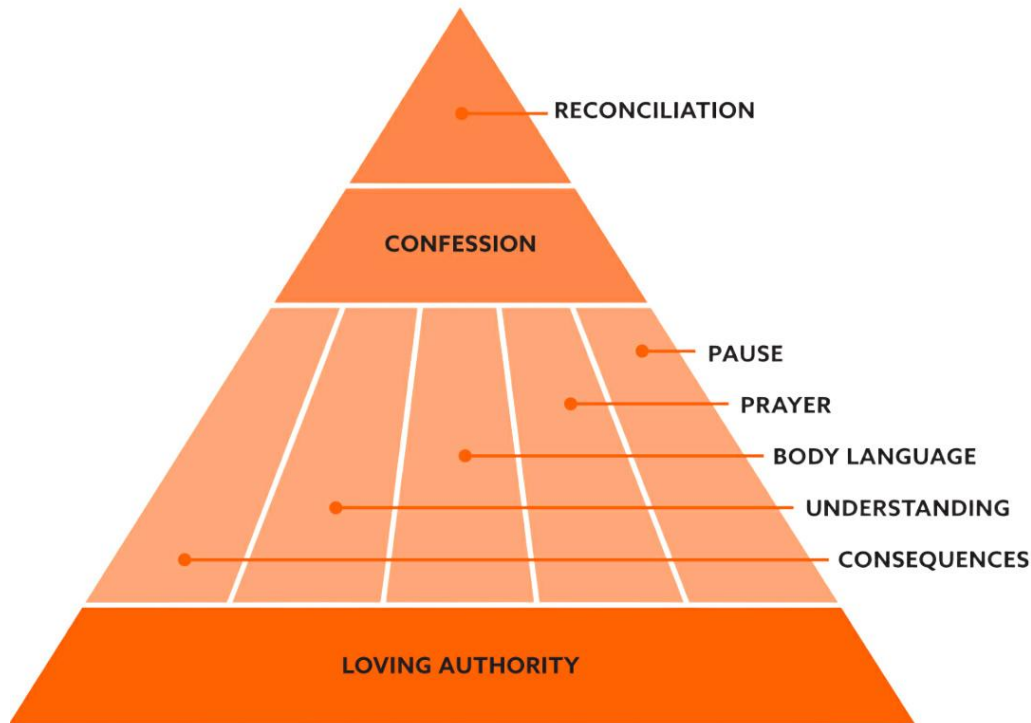
Title: NAVIGATING FAMILY DYNAMICS
WITH GRACE AND TRUTH

Main Scripture: Colossians 3:20-21

Cherish children's obedience.
(Col 3:12-17)

Foster fatherly encouragement.
(Eph 6:4, Heb 12:7-11, Prov 20:7, 1 Cor 11:1, Prov 22:6)

Pyramid of Discipline¹



Establish Loving Authority

This is intervening with a strong physical presence of tone or body language, in a loving way which is involved and interrupts, and often means removing the child from the situation. This is for their sake and for the sake of others, protecting them and the world from themselves.

Pause

This is as much for the child as for us, and is critical to model a healthy pattern to reorient those initial emotional reactions towards love and discipleship. Discipline is almost never at convenient times. Though it may be “on the move”, it does not need to be “off the cuff”.

¹ Justin Whitmel Earley, *Habits of the Household: Practicing the Story of God in Everyday Family Rhythms* (Zondervan, 2021).

Pray and Talk to Yourself

Begin by reminding yourself that ultimately God is the One who is our source for discipling our children well, but also God is discipling us too, even in those moments where we must intervene with our children. We can ask Him for wisdom, and use this time as an opportunity to invite our kids into this as well.

Example: “Lord, I am also [insert heart condition of child in trouble]. Help me to see that we both need You to guide us. Give me wisdom to disciple [child’s name].”

Use Body Language and Space More Than Words and Threats

Between our intervention, pausing, and praying, we may need to wait for our child’s reactivity to ebb. But we can remain present, and choose to take a relaxed posture while we wait for them to be ready to engage. When we show we are safe, calm, and non-reactive, then we are creating a space for honest dialogue and discipleship. This may mean requesting them to look into our eyes so that we know they are ready.

Be Relentless in Seeking Understanding

How we do this will depend greatly on their capacity to understand their own actions, but our heart must be to come alongside our children to help them understand their own hearts so they can eventually move towards heart repentance and change. Discipline as discipleship is self-reflective, and so this is when we may start asking questions to help them confront their heart condition, but also for us to seek to understand and walk them through what happened, why it happened, and equip them with tools to navigate their emotions as they grow.

Think Carefully About Consequences

Consequences are only helpful if they move us one step closer to reconciliation, but have the opposite effect if they are rooted in retribution. This is not about stopping a behaviour, but using the consequence as a means of discipleship towards the end of heart transformation, repairing what is damaged (materially or relationally), and equipping the child for future situations.

Insist on Apologies as Confession

If repentance is the actual turning of our hearts from sin, then confession is that first step where we have to confront the nastiness of our sin “out loud”. We may not always mean our apology at first, but it is an important step towards this end. Importantly, this is saying things we desperately don’t want to say so we can mean the things we desperately want to mean.

Always End in Reconciliation

No matter where we might begin, this is what we are always building to with discipline as discipleship. Of course, we always want to look for a way in which reconciliation flows naturally as a part of the consequence, but even if it doesn’t, this is perhaps the most important step. This step is all about repairing the damage done, materially or relationally, through words or actions, and should have defined steps and end point (perhaps a hug, acceptance of apology, etc.).

The Small Group Sermon Study

Opening Prayer: *Father, in Jesus' name, through the Holy Spirit, come and speak to us, teach us and transform us as we read, discuss and reflect on Your word.*

Read the key passage(s) of Scripture from the message and review the points from the sermon notes, then answer the following questions:

1. What did you like or appreciate about this message? What was new or surprising to you?
2. What do we learn from this passage and message about God (Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit)? What do we learn about who He is, how He feels, what actions He takes, etc.?
3. What does this passage tell us about responding to God? What does living by faith look like in this passage?
4. What don't you understand or what other questions does this passage/sermon make you ponder?
5. What challenges are being brought to light in this sermon/passage? Are there any obstacles to which you can relate?
6. What attitudes, emotions, behaviors, or ideas are being exposed? How do they line up with what we know about God's character and His word?

Personal Reflection:

Silently re-read the key Scripture(s) from the message, asking the Holy Spirit to speak to you.

- What do you need to surrender to Jesus? How will you respond to what God is showing you?
- What verse, phrase or word do you need to take with you this week? How will you act on what you've heard?

Prayer: *Spend time praying for one another (that we would grow in our love for God and others, that we would be transformed by what God has revealed, that we would be alert and obedient to God, etc.).*