

Here's my list of understandings that can secure children's hearts and increase your influence so you'll be able to motivate them to be responsible, brave, compassionate, and so much more. Ideas in the chapters that follow support and build upon these truths.

- Parent by faith. Pray for God's insight and direction, let Him work in your child, and trust Him with the result while you parent with thoughtful intentionality.
- Parent with grace and mercy. Although consistently responding to children's behavior is important, so is surprising them with your kindness. Know when they're willfully disobedient and when they're not.
- Forgive quickly and often. Ask to be forgiven quickly and often. Remember that the past does not define your children or control the future.
- Tell your children you are confident in God. Teach them Scripture, pray for and with them, go to church together, and serve with them.
- Prioritize children, not their behavior.
- You can dislike what children do while you still like and love them. Remember we can all have bad days, but we're not bad.
- Be who you want your children to be. And, teach them who you want them to be. Much is caught *and* taught. Want them to be successful.
- Children are human beings, not human doings. Who they are is more important than what they do.
- Raise the children you were given, not the children you wish you had.
- Create memories and build traditions with individual children and with your family. Laugh, dream, think, feel, play, read, and explore together.
- Parent so children will want to be your friend later. Don't prioritize friendship now.
- Remember needs and wants are different. Children don't need everything they want. Do parent to meet their needs.
- Seek to understand before trying to be understood. Ask better questions. Listen longer. Be fully present without devices in your hands.
- Listen when children are little if you want them to talk with you when they're older. Answer their questions when they're little if you want them to ask questions when they're older.
- When children have a problem, remember they are not the problem. Help them without making them feel like a project you're trying to finish or a problem you're trying to solve.
- Teach children to fail well. Life can be challenging. They must be able to recover from adversity.
- Unconditionally love and value your children. Ideally, there's nothing they can do that would cause you to love them more *or* less. They should not have to prove their value to you.
- Prioritize progress, not perfection. Remember, you and your children are being perfected, but Jesus is the only One Who is perfect. Perfection is the destination; transformation is how our children and we will get there.

I hope this list is both encouraging and challenging. Ideas in the chapters that follow support and build upon these truths. Would you agree that relationship changes are easier to make when everyone knows about the new goals and expectations? Children sometimes tell me, "I feel like my parents have the rule book. I wish they'd share it with me." Perhaps this list can serve as a rule book of sorts.

Taken from [\*Start with the Heart: How to Motivate Your Kids to be Compassionate, Responsible, and Brave \(Even When You're Not Around\)\*](#) by Kathy Koch (©2019). Published by [Moody Publishers](#). Used by permission.