

Reparenting

Reparenting

A Re-opportunity To Have A Happy Childhood

**A Workbook Using Biblical
Principles to Overcome
Childhood Deficits
Volume 2**

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Reparenting, Volume 2

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Foreword

THERE ARE THREE things I would like for you, the reader, to keep in mind as you make your way through this workbook.

One is that the book is intended to be practical, conversational, and user friendly. To this end, we have taken some liberties at the expense of scholarship and tradition. We are OK with that if you are.

The second thing is that I have used this material and approach effectively for about thirty years in counseling and in seminars. I am not guessing, experimenting, or trying to prove anything about the content. God blesses it because it was His idea. It works, and it will work for you, if you stick with it, meet the conditions, and give it time.

Finally, the two-volume thing is not a bad idea. The first volume is sort of pre-op: it is necessary preparation that gets you ready for the heavier experience. The second volume walks you through the actual therapy, which can complete your reparenting.

My instructions are here simply to put them in writing and make them available. The rest is up to you.

—Dr. Larry Gilliam

Preface

WORKING THROUGH CHILDHOOD issues, moving from the past to the present, taking specific steps in a nurturing journey, and growing in Christ are premises of reparenting. With skill analogous to that of a virtuoso, Dr. Gilliam elucidates a myriad of exciting details of reparenting. Unfortunately, many Christian fathers do not know Ephesians 6:4, which says, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Too often, a child will repeat a dysfunctional pattern. *Reparenting* offers tools to abate this pernicious pattern.

My gifted colleague uses a plethora of verses in his task of laying out the principles of reparenting. Consistent with this desire, I could not help but muse a bit on Isaiah 43:18–19a: “Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing.” Just as God helped the Israelites of yesteryear with the concept of moving beyond the past, God can help us today. One caveat I offer: although this journey is too emotional for a few, for most the journey is refreshing and resplendent. The goal is to embrace Romans 8:15: “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’”

Finally, as I read this book, I was reminded of Ockham’s Razor of the fourteenth century, which stated that explanations should be kept as simple as possible. Dr. Gilliam has done an exemplary job of taking an abstruse subject and making it both pellucid and pragmatic.

I previously recommended Dr. Gilliam’s original book on reparenting in 2007. My recommendation has not abated! I recommend it even more highly today, now that Volume 2 carries the process of healing and recovery to its attainable conclusion.

—**Frank Minirth, M.D., Ph.D.**

Introduction

The What and Why of Reparenting

REPARMENTING IS NOT the same as parenting; although, one's potential for effective parenting will probably be enhanced by it. It is not the same as family therapy; although, one's ability to maintain healthy, satisfying relationships with family members (or anyone else) will probably be improved as a result of the experience. Reparenting might be thought of as a re-opportunity to have a happy childhood.

Here is a little more sophisticated way of saying the same thing: reparenting is another opportunity for individual, adult believers to grow through and progress beyond certain personal deficits or limitations from childhood that may cause them to back into the future while focused on a painful past.

This is a good definition because deep inside you, there is a part of you that still thinks, feels, and reacts like you did as a child. That emotional child, wounded or healthy, will stay with you throughout your whole life, and it is that part of you which is the most sensitive to the pain you experienced earlier in your life. Whenever you get in touch with that emotional child, even today, you probably find that some of the pain is still as fresh as the day that it happened.

You see, time alone does not bring about healing to these kinds of wounds. There are actually steps and a process that you must go through to nurture and to heal the child within you. This process is called *reparenting*, and it includes the mentality that Christ described when He spoke of the need for us to become like a little child. Of course, He does not want us to be *childish* after we have grown up, as it says in 1 Corinthians 13:11, but He does want us to become more *childlike* in several ways, as He implies in Matthew 18:2–5 and 19:13–14.

Since no one had perfect parents and no one was a perfect child, all of us reached adulthood with certain deficits from our original upbringing—some greater than others. As adults, we cannot go back and demand that our parents somehow rewind our lives and correct everything that we feel should have been different. It *is* possible, however, even today, to tap three effective resources for the reparenting roles of nurturance, affirmation, and guidance that allow the vulnerable, little inner child to grow and experience healing. One resource is your adult self, the second is another caring person or support group, and the third is God Himself.

When you accept your personal role in allowing this to happen, tap the resources of another caring person, and apply the biblical principles, which allow God to fulfill the missing dimensions, your reparenting can be completed. You will then find that, in this regard, it is really “never too late to have a happy childhood”!

—**Dr. Larry Gilliam**

The V-I-T-A-L Format

I DO CONSIDER the format for reparenting to be vital. The approach, the strategy, the process, and the sequence all figure into the format, and to a large extent, they depend upon it.

As I recall, Alice in Wonderland once asked the Cheshire Cat which road she should take. The simple but profound reply was, “That depends a good deal upon where you want to get to.”

Imagine a couple starting on a vacation, and the husband, who is to do the driving, asks his wife for a roadmap. “Which one?” she responds.

“It really doesn’t matter,” he replies, “Just grab one, and let’s get started.” *Not!*

Someone attempted to define the word *format* by noting that it is made up of the two smaller words, *form* and *at*. His conclusion was, “It must be some kind of *form* that helps you figure out where you’re *at!*” Bingo. That will work.

“Whether you end up as a placemat or a doormat,
Can vitally depend upon your basic format.”

Each chapter, therefore, has been purposefully designed to follow the pattern shown below, the initials of which appropriately spell the acrostic V-I-T-A-L.

VANTAGE POINT—This is defined in *Funk and Wagnall’s New International Dictionary* as a strategic position affording perspective. That is a fancy way of saying, “Where am I, and how does the answer fit into the total picture?” This seems like a good way to start each chapter.

INPUT FROM DR. G.—This includes the basic material of the chapter. It may sound a little academic at times, but it is the information necessary for the next step or next point of progress.

TAKING IT PERSONALLY—This is your opportunity to mentally explore how the basic material relates to your unique situation. It is designed to be thought-provoking, to elicit insight, and to stimulate processing.

APPLICATION—This section takes on the flavor of a laboratory experience. It involves something to do. It includes action-type answers to the question, “So what?”

“LITTLE MONA DID IT!”—This is the ongoing true story of how “Little Mona” (severely and repeatedly abused as a child) and her adult counterpart Ramona struggled their way through each step described in this book. In this section, “Little Mona” looks back and beckons other wounded inner children to follow her footprints to healing and wholeness.

Chapter 11

Communicating and Interacting with “The Kid”

Vantage Point

SINCE THE VANTAGE Point is defined in *Funk and Wagnall’s New International Dictionary* as a strategic position affording perspective, we should probably attempt, next, to determine where we are and express it in a logical and understandable way.

It is assumed that almost everyone who embarks upon Volume 2 of the reparenting journey will have already traveled through Volume 1 and that the footprints of that experience will lead you naturally from Chapter 10 of Volume 1 and deposit you gently on the threshold of Chapter 11 of Volume 2 with ease and continuity. (It is possible, of course, that for whatever reasons, some will start with Volume 2, just as some will at times eat their dessert first! It’s OK).

A backward glance is certainly permissible, provided it is followed by a forward look. In other words, a brief glance over your shoulder can be helpful in gaining perspective if it is followed rather quickly by a refreshing, inspirational shift in focus to what lies ahead. Once again, you must avoid the temptation to back into the future while focused on a painful past.

Your backward glance should probably include a review of the Process Checklist as it was presented in Volume 1. It may be thought of as a roadmap or an overview of the journey you have begun. In particular, examine closely items 1 through 15. This will give you a reminder of the distance you probably traveled as you worked through Volume 1.

Take a few minutes right now to place a checkmark by each of the first fifteen items, if you feel that you have adequately completed that part of the process. If you cannot conscientiously check off all fifteen of the items, take the time to go back to Volume 1 and review the chapter that corresponds to the item you could not check off. This will be well worth your while, because

the Process Checklist is cumulative, and the sequence of the items is significant. In other words, item sixteen includes the assumption that items 1 through 15 have been completed.

Process Checklist

- ___ 1. Pick up the workbook (Volume 1); read the introductory pages.
- ___ 2. Get started with a ready, willing heart (Chapter #1).
- ___ 3. Define and accept the concept of reparenting (Chapter #2).
- ___ 4. Understand and accept the model of the inner child as a legitimate, effective way of representing that part of you that still thinks, feels, and reacts like a child (Chapter #3).
- ___ 5. Learn how the child “shows up” and expresses itself (Chapter #4).
- ___ 6. Realize that some people have hidden (or locked) the child away deeply in their emotional basement and have a hard time believing that it exists at all (Chapter #4).
- ___ 7. Get ready to meet “The Kid” (Chapter #5).
- ___ 8. Get in touch with the adult’s attitude toward the child (Chapter #5).
- ___ 9. Meet and greet “The Kid” (Chapter #6).
- ___ 10. Differentiate between the inner child and the outer adult (Chapter #7).
- ___ 11. Learn the Biblical concepts of *childishness vs. childlikeness* (Chapter #8).
- ___ 12. Accept the goal of becoming more *childlike* and less *childish* (Chapter #8).
- ___ 13. Learn more about your inner child (Chapter #9).
- ___ 14. Feel some feelings that might represent your inner child (Chapter #10).
- ___ 15. Try to understand how the child feels and why he/she feels that way. Get in touch with the emotions of the child (Chapter #10).
- ___ 16. Communicate with, interact with, and pray for this child (Chapter #11).
- ___ 17. Re-check the level of your attitude toward the child on the *G-Scale Hierarchy of Importance*. Design a strategy to raise your attitude toward the child to a higher level on this scale (Chapter #12).
- ___ 18. Assure the child of its safety and your commitment. Plan to do something that the child would enjoy (Chapter #12).
- ___ 19. Learn other ways in which you (the adult) can communicate with your inner child (Chapter #13).
- ___ 20. Learn some reasons why you (the adult) must communicate with your inner child (Chapter #13).
- ___ 21. Identify negative messages said to or by the child (Chapter #14).

- ___ 22. Replace the negative messages with positive messages (Chapter #14).
- ___ 23. Use music to reinforce the positive messages (Chapter #14).
- ___ 24. Explore what it would mean for you (the adult) to “manage” or parent your inner child (Chapter #15).
- ___ 25. Design an ongoing strategy for “managing” or parenting your inner child (Chapter #15).
- ___ 26. Improve your relationship skills and apply them to your inner child, including consideration of temperament and personality factors (Chapter #16).
- ___ 27. Complete your (the adult’s) part in the process of reparenting (Chapter #17).
- ___ 28. Plan and allow for the role that “Other People” must play in completing your process of reparenting (Chapter #18).
- ___ 29. Plan and allow for the role that “God, your Father” must play in completing your process of reparenting (Chapter #19).
- ___ 30. Prepare a program of maintenance and follow-up to retain and reinforce the benefits of your reparenting (Chapter #20).

Repeating Your Vows

A couple’s fiftieth wedding anniversary represents quite an outstanding achievement and usually is celebrated in a special way. Often the celebration includes an opportunity for the couple to repeat their wedding vows at their church or in the presence of a few friends or family members.

This is not done because the marriage contract would expire if not renewed. It is done instead as a symbol of continuing commitment. The gesture seems to say, “Even knowing everything I know now, after fifty years of marriage, I am glad I did it and would do it all over again.” As far as I know, no one has ever responded, “No, I won’t,” during such a ceremony.

You will now have a similar opportunity to repeat your vows—the vows of the Contract-Covenant you committed to in Volume 1. It is not because the first one has expired. Like the fiftieth anniversary, it is more of a symbolic act that re-affirms your commitment to yourself and God, now that you understand a lot more about what it means. It is a good thing to do, and this is a good time to do it.

There is an old story about a man who started to swim across a lake. In the story, he swam half the way across and came to the conclusion that he could not make it, so he turned around and swam back to where he started. Obviously, for the same amount of effort, he could have completed the task.

You are now halfway through the process of reparenting. It would be wise to complete that journey.

Once again, please read and initial each of the numbered items of the Contract-Covenant that follows:

CONTRACT-COVENANT

1. I acknowledge that deep inside me there is a part of me that still thinks, feels, and sometimes reacts like a child. _____(Initial.)
2. I understand that this emotional child, wounded or healthy, is a part of who I am and will stay with me throughout my life. _____(Initial.)
3. I understand that time alone does not bring about healing and restoration to this part of me, but that there are steps and a process that I must go through. _____(Initial.)
4. I accept the idea that the nurturing steps of reparenting can be experienced and that God Himself can fulfill the missing dimensions and complete my reparenting. _____(Initial.)
5. I recognize my responsibility to myself (the adult); my little, inner child; the people I care about; and God Himself to work through the steps and process of reparenting. _____(Initial.)
6. I know it will not be easy, but I (the adult) do hereby accept this responsibility and commit to work through the steps and complete the process as directed. _____(Initial.)

Next, sign your name on the line below, where it requests "Signature of Adult," and write the date in the designated blank.

Then, put your pen in your non-dominant hand (the hand you do not usually write with). Read the inner child's promise to help. Then, use your non-dominant hand to print the name you were actually called as a child (first name only) on the line where it requests "Signature of Inner Child (Print using opposite hand)." Finally, print the date in the designated blank.

Signature of Adult

Date

I promise to help.

Signature of Inner Child
(Print using opposite hand)

Date

There is one additional point of review that would be helpful before concluding this section. It is an excerpt from Chapter 7 of Volume 1.

I will repeat it here, word-for-word, so that you can continue moving forward in Volume 2. Fasten your seat belt. Here we go!

You may be familiar with the “super heroes” called the Power Rangers. (My grandson used to keep me updated on things like this). In the T.V. series they would at times combine all of their super powers to form a gigantic robotic-looking fighting machine called a megazord. It could accomplish mighty feats and overpower monstrous evil opponents. It was also pretty awesome in appearance. But if you could zoom in and look in through its goggles (or its eyes), you would see all of the Power Rangers seated inside its head, operating the controls.

At times it seemed that the big machine was being driven by a committee! At other times, one or another of the Rangers would take over and direct the total organism through a crisis or threat.

In like manner, if you could take a look “inside your head,” you would see a team of potential drivers. One would be you the adult. Another would be your inner child. Each of you would have access to some controls, but there would be only one steering wheel. That would represent your will, or in this case, your “steering will.”

At times the adult and the child will negotiate and agree on who is going to drive the organism. On other occasions, however, one or the other will rise up, take charge, and direct the person through a crisis or threat. On still other occasions, the two may struggle for control, and the person may behave randomly, irrationally, or may shut down completely and become immobilized.

Here are a few tips to help you recognize whether it is the adult or the inner child who has taken control and has begun to drive the organism:

1. Emotional reactions (especially over-reactions) are usually the work of the inner child.
2. Serious, analytical thinking is nearly always the work of the adult.
3. Behavior resulting from the desire for immediate gratification usually originates with the inner child. (The Kid can’t wait!)
4. Behavior resulting from delayed gratification is nearly always the work of the adult. (The adult can decide to wait.)
5. The inner child is often creative, curious, playful, and spontaneous.
6. The adult is often logical, predictable, formal, and inhibited according to rules or regulations.
7. In general, the inner child exhibits childish and immature attitudes and behaviors.
8. In general, the adult exhibits more grown up and mature attitudes and behaviors.
9. At times the child may surface, and an adult may behave in a delightful childlike manner. This is good and healthy, unless it is excessive or at inappropriate times.
10. At other times the child may surface, and an adult may behave in a socially unacceptable childish manner. This is usually undesirable and unhealthy, but it happens very often.

Input from Dr. G.

Please notice that the title of this chapter is “Communicating and Interacting with ‘The Kid.’” More specifically, notice that item sixteen on the Process Checklist says, “Communicate with, interact with, and pray for this child.” Obviously, this chapter will focus on the necessity for and the importance of effective, two-way exchanges between your adult and your inner child in the process of reparenting. Attention will also be given to some methods through which this may be done.

The question is, “How can I, the adult, communicate and interact with my inner child?” The first part of the answer is that it already happens frequently, even if you are not consciously aware of it. The second part of the answer is that you can become better and better at detecting and defining when it is happening. The third part of the answer is that you can do this on purpose and with purpose by using the techniques described in this section. Notice that the following items form an acrostic that spells COMMUNICATE.

Some Methods of Communicating with the Inner Child

Childlike activities (participating as an adult)

Opposite hand-written conversation

Music (listening, singing, composing)

Metaphors (stories), meditation, and prayer

Unmasking (safely and wisely)

Nurturing children, pets, teddy bears, etc.

Interpreting/decoding certain dreams

Creative expression

Allowing the positive input of certain adults to revise some old, negative, internal messages

Taking part in group exercises designed to enhance integration between the child and adult

Empy chair exercise, examining photos, and emotional markers

Don't be concerned if the methods on the previous page don't seem to make sense. I simply listed them first as an acrostic in order to give the reader an overview. Now we'll take the items one at a time and explain what they mean and how they look when you do them.

Childlike activities: This simply means to participate in some activities that children often like to do. It could involve playing certain games, going to a playground, buying yourself a toy, or any number of other types of activities. Watching children at an elementary school at play during recess can give you some ideas. Your participation as an adult will likely bring some surprising emotions to the surface.

Opposite hand-written conversation: The adult can write a question or a comment. Then, the pen or pencil can be shifted to the other hand (the one not usually used for writing), and the child can respond. The response often resembles the handwriting of a child. Often, the child may actually respond with a meaningful or significant insight.

Music (listening, singing, composing): Music has been called the “universal language.” It is well known that certain types of music bring out certain types of feelings or emotions. Simply listening to selected music can sometimes cause the child part of you to surface. Singing or otherwise participating in children's songs can enhance communication with the inner child. The inner child may especially delight in being allowed to improvise, compose, or express itself creatively in or through music.

Metaphors (stories), meditation, and prayer: This letter *M* stands first for metaphors. These are stories designed to produce visual images through which a person can feel safe and relaxed so that he or she may be open to allowing further exploration of feelings. In other words, these types of stories are not just for interest or analogy but will often touch deeply hidden emotions. A small child has an amazing ability to relate to a character in a story who is experiencing something with which he, the child, is familiar. *M* also stands for meditation, which, in this case, means prayerful consideration of situations, circumstances, certain memories, and potential solutions.

Unmasking (safely and wisely): Behind the many masks that you may wear is the precious, little person we call the *inner child*. In order for this little person to receive healing and restoration, certain protective masks must be removed in a manner that is gentle, safe, and wise. In the process of reparenting, some exercises are designed for this purpose.

Nurturing children, pets, teddy bears, etc.: Children like to nurture small animals, teddy bears, etc. because they need the nurturing themselves. When an adult nurtures children, pets, and so forth, the child within gets a special kind of benefit that he/she might have missed earlier in life.

Interpreting/decoding certain dreams: Dreams are sometimes an attempt of one part of you (at the subconscious level) to communicate with another part of you (at the conscious level). The message, however, is often in code or wearing a disguise. Decoding and interpreting these kinds of dreams can be extremely helpful and insightful in the process of reparenting.

Creative expression: Arts, crafts, and hobbies provide great opportunities for the inner child to surface and express itself, especially when there is freedom to be truly creative. In fact, such activities can be initiated by the adult to encourage participation by the child.

Allowing the positive input of certain adults to revise some old, negative, internal messages: People tend to act out the negative messages they learn in childhood. In an atmosphere of safety and acceptance, certain exercises can be effective in identifying and replacing old, negative, internal messages.

Taking part in group exercises designed to enhance integration between child and adult: It is necessary to tap three effective resources to foster the healthy integration of the inner child and the adult. One resource is your adult self, the second is another caring person or support group, and the third is God Himself. On a daily basis, the people whom we admire and trust are influencing us in certain ways, whether we are aware of it or not. The positive impact of these other people, however, may be enhanced and accelerated by participating in appropriate group exercises designed for that purpose.

Empty chair exercise, examining photos, and emotional markers: These three activities have something in common; they all stimulate the use of the imagination to get in touch with feelings that represent the inner child. Whether we are imagining the little person in the empty chair, trying to recall the thoughts and feelings of the little person in a photo, or designing an experience to emotionally mark a point of progress, something abstract should appear on the monitor of the mind's eye that can result in a positive change or a healthy shift during the process of reparenting.

Taking It Personally

In this chapter, "Taking It Personally" is designed to be a mental exercise with some emotional effects. The next section ("Application") will be more experiential and activity-oriented, but for now, get your "thinking cap" on!

Look back over the Methods of Communicating with the Inner Child, which you have just finished reading. Take the methods one at a time, and try to imagine how each would look and feel if you actually did it now, as an adult.

For example, begin with "Childlike Activities." Select a specific activity that children often like to do, and imagine yourself doing it. In your mind, make the decisions you would have to make if you were physically participating, such as, where you would do it, who you would do it with, and what equipment or attire you would need. Now, as vividly as possible, imagine yourself doing the activity. See the action happening in your mind's eye. Next, imagine how you might feel during and after the activity. Then, respond to the questions below: