

*The Newborn Promise Podcast*

*Episode 21: Defining and Shaping Influences with Dr. Tedd Tripp*

Audra Haney: Thanks for tuning in to the Newborn Promise podcast, a production of Graham Blanchard, Incorporated. You are listening to an interview with Dr. Ted Tripp called Defining and Shaping Influences. For today's show notes, transcript, and more information about our recently released book, Your Newborn Promise Project, please visit [grahamblanchard.com](http://grahamblanchard.com).

Welcome back to our podcast. We are so honored to have you here with us for our wisdom packed interview with Dr. Ted Tripp. If you missed part one, please go back and catch that, as Dr. Tripp had so many great insights into the heart of our children and how to shepherd those hearts with great care and intentionality. Dr. Tripp dives even deeper today and challenges our hearts and motives as parents. Again, a special thank you to our guest interviewer, Graham Blanchard Project Director, Ansley Kynes, for conducting this interview while I was on a short sabbatical. Here's Ansley and Dr. Tripp.

Ansley Kynes: Dr. Tripp, in our last discussion, you spoke a lot on the heart and why we not only have to look at the outward behavior of the child, but really focus in on the hard issues behind those behaviors. And in your book, you mentioned two things that affect the heart, shaping influence and God-ward orientation. Explain to our listeners what these two things are.

Dr. Tripp: When I think of shaping influences, I think of all the things that happened in a child's life that shape the person he becomes. Some of those things are under our control. Some of those things are not under our control. Like for example, birth order. Where the child fits into the constellation of children in the family. If you have a large family, the older child's experience of life is very different than the youngest child's experience of life, because the oldest child gets pressed into service to care for younger ones. The younger child never gets pressed into service to care for older ones. Birth order affects our kids.

The socioeconomic level of affluence or lack of affluence in our family. That affects our kids. It affects opportunities they have and so forth. The general flow of the culture, the cultural challenges we face. Things, for example, like all the electronic devices these days. Those are challenges for parents that I never faced with teenage kids. The education of children, the church context in which we raise them, their family values. What's important in the family life. What passes without notice. And the

way family roles are worked out. How a husband's leadership is worked out. How a wife's role as a mother and nurturer and helpmate to her husband is worked out. I think all those are the shaping influences of life.

Any of those shaping influences that are under our control, the way we work out our roles as parents, the way we live as husband and wife, our faithfulness to God, church attendance, being part of a community and living out our lives as Christians. All those things are under our control. We want to do the very best way we can do them. We also recognized there a lot of shaping influences that are not under our control. Those are the shaping influences.

How they impact our kids is determined by what our kids do with God. If our kids are loving God and knowing God, they can respond to those shaping influences with wisdom. If they are worshiping and serving idols of the heart, they will never be able to respond to those shaping influences with wisdom. How the shaping influences impact our children really is determined by the God-ward orientations of their hearts.

We had that illustrated, for example, in the life of Joseph, where there were terrible shaping influences in Joseph's life, but because he knew God, at the end he was able to say you meant evil, but God meant good to bring about saving many people. Joseph had an understanding of who God was that enabled him to process even the negative things that happened in his life.

If our kids don't know God and are not entrusting themselves to God, but rather are trying to serve various idols of the heart, then they will never be able to respond in that kind of a gracious way to the shaping influences of life. I think those two things really, the shaping influences of life and the God-ward orientations of our children's hearts really determine the person that our kids become.

Ansley Kynes:

And the importance of the heart definitely doesn't end with our children. You really challenge the motivations of our hearts as parents and the goals we set for our kids. What are some ways that you see parents setting ungodly goals for their kids, and what sort of effects does this have in the long run?

Dr. Tripp:

Well, I think sometimes we can have very externalized standards. You better get good grades. If you get good grades, then you're good. If you don't get good grades, you're not good. Or you have to excel in sports, and if you don't excel in sports, I'm not going to be happy, because I was always an athlete and I wanted you to fulfill my dreams. We can have just a goal of being able to manage our kids and control them and have them respond to us with obedience. Whatever our parenting goals are, they will shape what we do as a parent.

I think making sure our goals are worthy goals is so important. I think the most worthy goal is the chief end of man is to know God and enjoy him forever, and that as parents, our focus has got to be I want to raise kids ... I want to show my kids the glory of God, and I want them to see the wonderful God is, because I know they're made for God and they will only live in this world with wisdom and insight if they know God and love God. I want my home to be a place where I'm showing them the wonder of who God is.

I think the temptation is for parents to hone in on lesser goals. The real goals we have our kids ... because every Christian parent is going to say, "Oh, yeah. I want my kids to know God." And yet there are many parents who will not attend church for the entire baseball season because their kids on a traveling baseball team and they've got to be on that team if they're going to excel. So what is the parent really showing as the goal for the child. It's excelling at baseball or soccer or basketball or gymnastics or whatever the sport might be.

I was at a church one time. This little guy came in, a nine or 10-year-old boy. He was wearing a baseball uniform. I thought what an odd thing to wear to church. But I caught on later, because at a quarter of 12, his family got up and they left the church. Now, they weren't mad at the pastor. They left because there's another worship service to go to, and if you're late for that one, the coach won't let you play.

Now, if this little guy ever concludes the life that is truly life has to do with knowing God. Nothing's more important than that. It'll be in spite of, not because of the example of his parents, because the parents are really feeding the idol of excelling in baseball rather than focusing this kid on the worthiness of God and the worship of God on the Lord's day.

I think that it's very easy for us as parents to get short-circuited on the things we think of as valuable. It might be sports, it might even be academics. It might be toys or psychological adjustment of our kids or all kinds of ... there are a whole range of possibilities. But if you watch parents, you can figure out what's important to parents. And kids know what's important to parents, too.

Ansley Kynes:

That's true. In addition to setting godly goals for our children, how do communication and correction play a part in parenting, and why must they work together?

Dr. Tripp:

Well, I think communication is certainly key. There are so many passages in scripture that talk about the importance of communication. I think of the passages that talk about the means of our communication. A man of wisdom. The proverb says use this words with restraint. When I think restrained speech, I think of avoiding too many words. Where words are many sin is not absent, Proverbs 10:19 says. The more words,

the less meaning. I think that Ecclesiastes 6:11. What does that profit anyone.

Parents can use too many words. We can fail to use words with restraint, and the quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of the rulers of fools. Whatever I'm shouting at my kids, I'm putting emotion in the foreground and meaning in the background. But quiet words put meaning in the foreground and emotion in the background. I think our means of communication is so important.

I think of the method of communication, I think of the importance of pleasant words. Pleasant word, Proverbs 16, says in three different place, "Pleasant words are honeycomb, sweet to the body, healing to the soul." We need to use pleasant words with our kids, because when a parent is angry, red-faced, yelling at their children, flicking little flecks of spit on them as they yell, they're not serving their child and they're not accomplishing their goals. If they could do a selfie of themselves at that moment, they would see how ridiculous they look. Red-faced, eyes bulging, yelling at their kid.

The kid is not looking at this red-faced, eyes bulging parent, saying "Wow, Dad. What wisdom you have. Throw on some more of your pearls of wisdom on me." He's looking at you thinking you're an idiot. I think that pleasant words ... not yelling at our kids ... using pleasant words. Pleasant words are honeycomb, sweet to the body, healing to the soul. Pleasant words promote construction. I think using pleasant words with our kids is so important.

I think also delighting in and understanding our kids. Proverbs, I think it's 18:2, says "A fool finds no pleasure in understanding, but delights in sureness of an opinion." We need to be people who find pleasure in understanding our children. That means we ask good questions. We listen to what's being said. We listen to what's not being said. We follow up their observations with more questions that are designed to help them understand themselves more thoroughly. I think that kind of communication, rich communication's so important.

Then I think, on the discipline, I think having consequences for our children that are not behavioristic, but not designed to modify behavior, but the consequences are focused on the importance of walking in God's ways and doing what is right before the Lord. The consequences are focused on underscoring the importance of God's truth. Those consequences should be reasonable. They should be logical, and we should also be reminding our kids that there's always more at stake than just this moment. That ultimately, the sowing and reaping principle, the word of God, he who sows to the flesh reaps destruction. He who sows to the Spirit reaps life, both in this life and in the life to come.

I think that communication and discipline come together, hand and glove, and so our discipline, where we're bringing consequences to our children, we're working out the sowing and reaping principle in scripture, and the way we communicate with our kids is very, very important.

Ansley Kynes:

That's challenging me in my parenting role today. Thank you for that. That was some good wisdom. What are some common pitfalls that you see new parents falling into?

Dr. Tripp:

I think probably fear and anxiety. Just being so afraid I'm not going to get it right because we want so much to get it right, and not resting, not resting in God and in God's care, and the fact that God will give me grace, God will give me wisdom. I think fear and anxiety. I think probably early on in parenting, we have the idea we're going to control our kids and we're going to manage things in such a way that we're going to be one step ahead of everything, recognizing I can't control everything. I have to rest in God and I've got to model that rest in God myself.

I think there's a phenomenon in our culture of people want to have children, but they don't want to be parents. They want to have children because children are fun, and we can go out with little children and people oo and ah at your kids, and it's great fun to have little kids, but you don't what invest what needs to be invested in kids. I think helping young parents see as a parent, I'm in this for the long haul, and my life is going to be organized, not around my career or around everything else. My life is really to be organized in many ways, around each of my kids. That's primary for me, because it's one of the most important callings I have in this season of life, is to nurture my children.

There will be other seasons of life. When you have little kids, you think the years stretch forward interminably. But those 18 or 20 years they spend in your home pass very, very quickly. I think recognizing in this season of life, I have no more important calling than to nurture and shepherd my kids. They'll be things that I'll be able to do in another season of life I can't do now. There may be hobbies that I have to lay down and I'll pick up again when my kids are grown, or there may be things that are good things that would be great fun to do, and they're not wrong, but I don't have time for them. I think always evaluating the choices that I make to make sure that I'm keeping my children and the calling God has given me to shepherd them is a primary concern, primary focus. I think that's a real important thing.

Ansley Kynes:

That's excellent. What are some ways that parents can make their own faith in a big God very real to their small kids?

Dr. Tripp:

Well I think just talking about God all the time, talking about God's goodness, even the little kids. "Oh, look how beautiful the day is. God made this beautiful day and he made the grass and the flowers and the birds. Listen to the birds this morning. God knows every one of those birds." It says not even a bird doesn't fall to the ground without God. Even or "Look at these bees. Oh, my. What amazing little animals that can fly like that, and who are making it possible for crops to grow and give us honey."

I think you just talking to kids all the time about God, because I think sadly, Ansley, there are families in which God is never spoken of day after day. There are days that have passed where there was no mention of God. And these are Christian families. I think talking about God and helping our kids to see the wonder of who God is in everything of life is just so important. Even in the morning, let's thank God this morning. God gave us a good night's sleep. We had a home that we could sleep in safely. We have food to eat this morning. Let's thank God. What wonderful gifts God has given us, so that we're taking nothing for granted, but in all things we're giving thanks to God.

I think just having God before our own faces so that it's the most natural thing in the world for us to talk about God. It's not something that we are scheming to do. It's something that we do because we are owned by him ourselves.

Ansley Kynes:

Dr. Tripp, do you have any additional advice or encouragement for new parents?

Dr. Tripp:

Well, I think that it's a very challenging time to be raising kids. Margie and I were talking about this just last week and talking about how challenging the job is these days because of the seismic changes that are taking place in our culture, and the challenges that parents have that we didn't have when we started raising children in 1969. I guess would want to encourage young parents today of just the necessity of keeping in God's word and keeping God before their faces, such that you're always bringing God before your face and living in the light of him and bringing that to your kids.

It is a very challenging time to be raising children, and I think there's more and more movement away from the idea of nurture children. Actually, we've seen this in Europe a lot. Actually, toward the idea of almost neutrality in raising kids. Rather than instilling in them a vision for God and a sense of the wonder of who God is, we want to keep that to ourselves and leave that up to them to develop or not develop, but we should be trying to influence them in those ways.

I've seen that again and again, especially in Europe, and I think that's where things are moving in our culture, really away from the concept of

indoctrinating children. It would be called indoctrination of children. But I think that it's exactly that kind of training that God calls us to.

Ansley Kynes: Well, Dr. Tripp. Thank you so much. Would you mind closing out our time praying for these new parents who might be listening?

Dr. Tripp: I would be happy to do that.

Father, we come to you today. And we come with hearts of gratitude and thankfulness for your great grace and great love in our lives. We thank you that you have sent your Son into the world to save sinners. And we thank you for opening our hearts to him and to his ways.

We thank you, Lord, for the gift of having children. We know children are the heritage of the Lord and the fruit of the womb is his reward. It is a great blessing to have children. I pray, Lord, for parents who are expecting kids, for parents who are working with newborns, for parents who are even in those early days of helping children get on a schedule where they can sleep at night and be awake in the daytime.

I pray, Father, for your grace that there would be a sense in parents of the goodness of God and rest in God and hope in God, that would take away anxiety and take away fear and take away a sense of I've got to get this right, and give them the ability to rest in you and to trust you and to find joy in you and to bring that joy of you to their kids.

We pray, Lord, for the challenges of raising kids in this connected, high tech era, for the challenges economically that often force both parents to work and take parents out of the role of daily nurture of their kids. We pray, Father, that you would give wisdom to parents that they would make wise choices and wise decisions about how to manage and spend money and that parents would be focused on the importance of this task of nurturing kids.

I ask, Lord, that you would give moms and dads hope. Not that they're going to get it right, but hope that there's a God who's full of grace and full of mercy, and who in amazing ways even overcomes our failures and shows our kids his grace in spite of us. We pray for your blessing. We pray that these things that we've talked about would be helpful to moms and dads. We ask this for Christ's glory. Amen.

Audra Haney: This is Audra Haney and that wraps up part two of our interview with Dr. Ted Tripp and guest interviewer, Ansley Kynes. Thank you again for joining us. Remember, you can get today's transcript, show notes, and as a podcast listener, 20% off our new book, Your Newborn Promise Project, with code [nppodcast@grahamblanchard.com](mailto:nppodcast@grahamblanchard.com).