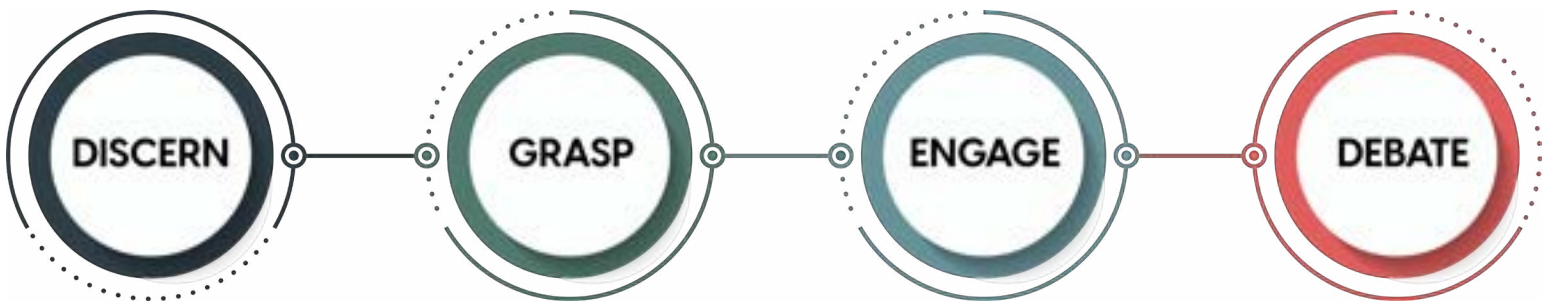


# Family Policy Institute OF WASHINGTON

## PARENTAL RIGHTS

DEFENDING THE AUTHORITY WITHIN A UNIQUE RELATIONSHIP



SMALL GROUP

# DEFENDER

SERIES

P. BRIAN NOBLE  
TRAVIS R. PARDO

© Copyright 2024  
FAMILY POLICY INSTITUTE OF WASHINGTON (FPIW)

Unless otherwise cited, Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible® (NASB).  
Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation.  
Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Version 1.0 (January 2024)

Family Policy Institute of Washington is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization  
founded to defend and advance biblical values in the public square.

Do not reproduce this publication. If you have questions, email FPIW at [info@fpiw.org](mailto:info@fpiw.org).  
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system,  
or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying recording,  
or otherwise, without prior written permission from FPIW.

To view additional books and resources, visit our website at [fpiw.org](http://fpiw.org) or [fpiwdefender.org](http://fpiwdefender.org).

This publication is designed to provide general information on biblical worldviews among Christians.  
It is not intended to provide legal counsel or other professional advice. If expert assistance is required,  
either legal or otherwise, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

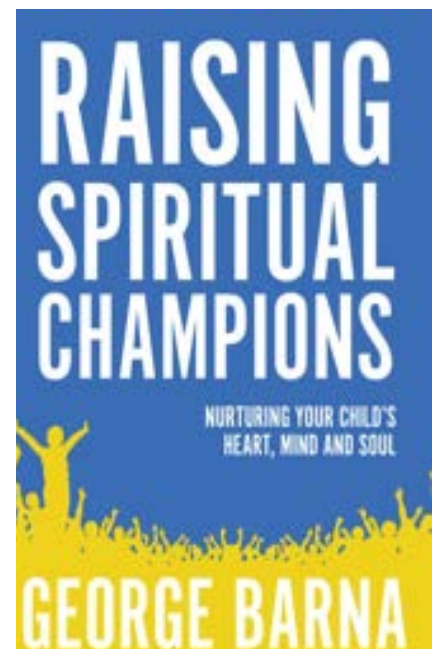
## SPECIAL THANKS

This booklet is indebted to several sources, especially these below.



**Anchoring Truths**  
A James Wilson Institute Project

[www.anchoringtruths.org](http://www.anchoringtruths.org)





## **DISCERN THE CULTURE**

Authority .....	4
Influence .....	5
Worldview Measurement .....	6
Worldviews .....	7
Government Becomes Parent .....	8-9

## **GRASP THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW**

Parenting Rights .....	10
Parenting Responsibilities .....	11
Role Model .....	12
Gatekeeper .....	13
Abuse .....	14
Outsourcing .....	15

## **ENGAGE THE LOGIC**

Defending Parental Authority.....	16-19
Is Parental Rights the Right Argument? .....	20-21

## **DEBATE THE ISSUE**

Government Schools .....	22
Inculcating Virtue .....	23
Parents as Watchmen .....	24
Parental Bill of Rights & Responsibilities .....	25



## **WHO HAS PRIMARY AUTHORITY – GOVERNMENT, OR PARENTS?**

**Children do not belong to any government entity;  
by God's design, children belong to their parents.**

**–Dr. James C. Dobson**



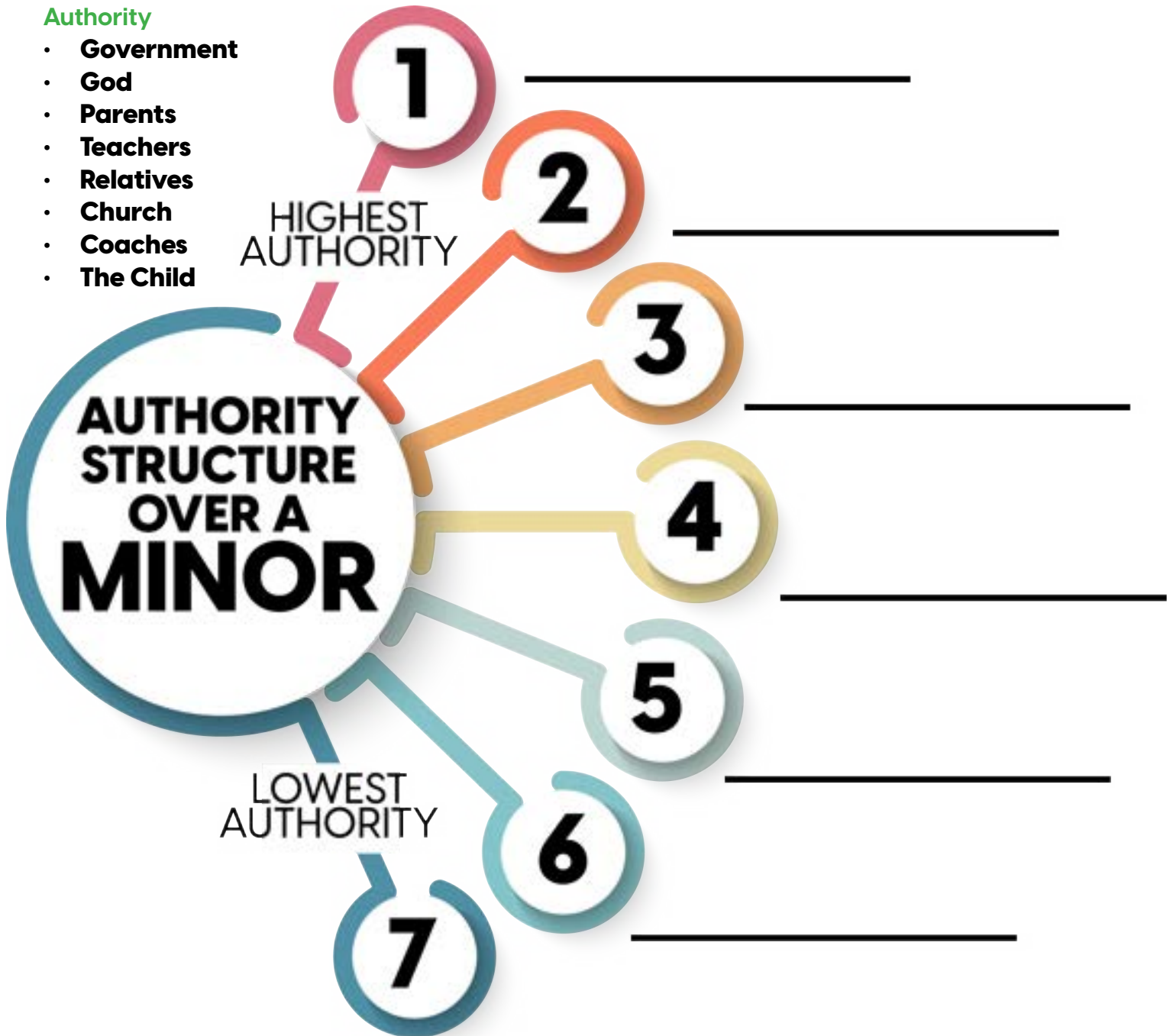


## AUTHORITY

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Discuss who has authority in a child's life. Number 1 is the highest authority and 7 is the lowest. Write that number on the blank line. Options are listed on the left side.

### Authority

- **Government**
- **God**
- **Parents**
- **Teachers**
- **Relatives**
- **Church**
- **Coaches**
- **The Child**



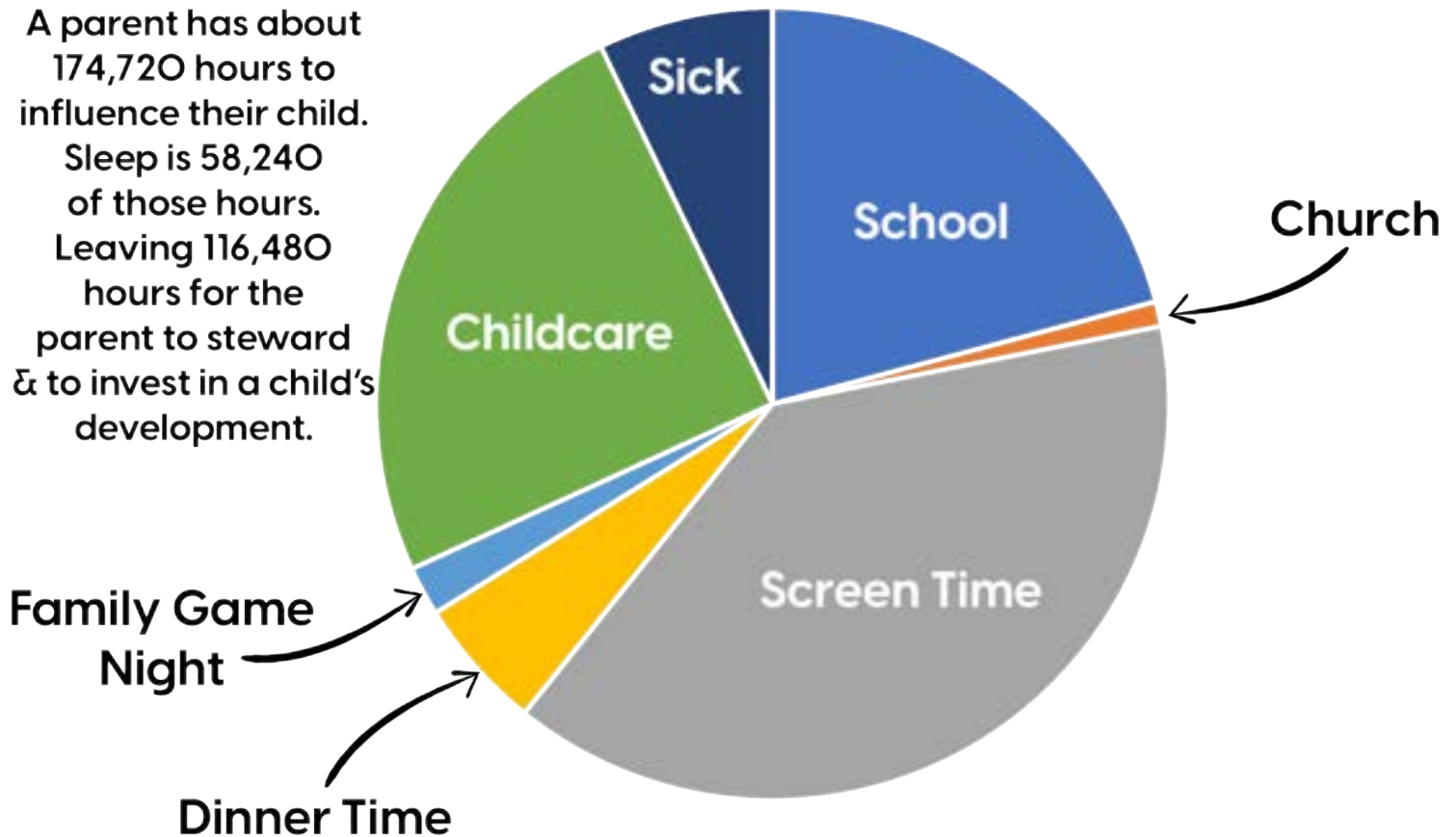
**"Parents are both role models  
and gatekeepers for their children..."**  
**—George Barna**



## INFLUENCE

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Discover and discuss the chart. The chart looks at a child from zero to twenty years old. (20 years x 52 weeks x 7 days x 24 hours = 174,720 hours.) Sleep is based on 8 hours of sleep per night.

A parent has about 174,720 hours to influence their child. Sleep is 58,240 of those hours. Leaving 116,480 hours for the parent to steward & to invest in a child's development.



# 13

**DID YOU KNOW?** A person's worldview starts developing in the second year of life (from 15 to 18 months) and is largely in place by the age of 13. That's the prime window of opportunity for discipleship.

—Dr. George Barna's book *Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind, and Soul*

## YEARS OLD

### Discussion Questions

1. What are your thoughts about the authority structure over a minor?
2. What do you think about the quotation above from George Barna?
3. If time was the only factor of influence, who would have the most influence, according to the chart?



## WORLDVIEW MEASUREMENT

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Rate our culture on these different worldviews

### MODERN CULTURE

### BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

Apathy							Enthusiasm (I Thessalonians 5:16, 19)			
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Presumption							Faith (Hebrews 11:1)			
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Resistance							Flexibility (Colossians 3:2)			
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Rejection							Forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32)			
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Harshness							Gentleness (I Thessalonians 2:7)			
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Unthankfulness							Gratefulness (I Corinthians 4:7)			
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Pride							Humility (James 4:6)			
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Unresponsiveness							Initiative (Romans 12:21)			
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Self-pity							Joyfulness (Psalm 16:11)			
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Fairness							Justice (Micah 6:8)			
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Selfishness							Love (I Corinthians 13:3)			
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Unfaithfulness							Loyalty (John 15:13)			
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Anger							Meekness (Psalm 62:5)			
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Willfulness							Obedience (II Corinthians 10:5)			
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Disorganization							Orderliness (I Corinthians 14:40)			
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5





## WORLDVIEWS

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Read a sampling of several popular worldviews.

### BIBLICAL THEISM

Believing that absolute moral truth exists; the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches; Satan is considered to be a real being or force, not merely symbolic; a person cannot earn their way into Heaven by trying to be good or do good works; Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; and God is the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the world who still rules the universe today <https://www.barna.com/research/competing-worldviews-influence-todays-christians/>

### SECULAR HUMANISM

Humanism viewed especially as relying on reason, logic, and naturalism as opposed to religious dogma and supernaturalism <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/secular%20humanism>

### MORALISTIC THERAPEUTIC DEISM

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is about inculcating a moralistic approach to life. It believes that central to living a good and happy life is being a good, moral person. That means being nice, kind, pleasant, respectful, and responsible; working on self-improvement; taking care of one's health; and doing one's best to be successful <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/controversy/common-misconceptions/on-moralistic-therapeutic-deism-as-u-s-teenagers-actual-tacit-de-facto-religious-faith.html>

### NIHILISM

A viewpoint that traditional values and beliefs are unfounded and that existence is senseless and useless; a doctrine that denies any objective ground of truth and especially of moral truths <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nihilism>

### MARXISM

A theory and practice of socialism including the labor theory of value, dialectical materialism, the class struggle, and dictatorship of the proletariat until the establishment of a classless society <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Marxism>

### CRITICAL RACE THEORY

A group of concepts such as the idea that race is a sociological rather than biological designation, and that racism pervades society and is fostered and perpetuated by the legal system; used for examining the relationship between race and the laws and legal institutions of a country and especially the United States <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/critical%20race%20theory>

### POSTMODERNISM

A theory that involves a radical reappraisal of modern assumptions about culture, identity, history, or language <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/postmodernism>

### EASTERN MYSTICISM OR NEW AGE

The experience of mystical union or direct communion with ultimate reality reported by mystics the belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality can be attained through subjective experience (such as intuition or insight) <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mysticism>

### SYNCRETISM

The combination of different forms of belief or practice the fusion of two or more originally different inflectional forms <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/syncretism>

### DID YOU KNOW?

94% of parents of pre-teens have a worldview known as Syncretism or a blending of worldviews.

Dr. George Barna's book *Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind, and Soul* (Arizona Christian University Press, 2023 with Fed Books)



## **DISCERN: GOVERNMENT BECOMES PARENT**

---

**Question: Should government fund children receiving “gender affirming surgery”?** Read a summary of this law in Washington State, ESSB [Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill] 5599. A brief summary from the bill itself is below:

- Expands the compelling reasons for a youth shelter or other similar organization not to notify a parent following the child's entry to the shelter or organization when a minor child is seeking or receiving gender affirming treatment and reproductive health care services.
- Allows host homes to host a youth seeking or receiving gender affirming treatment or reproductive health care services without receiving parental permission.
- Establishes requirements for host home programs that serve youth without parental authorization seeking or receiving “protected health care services” to notify the Department of Children, Youth, and Families and provide certain case management.

**Against ESSB 5599, Pastor Russell B. Johnson of The Pursuit NW in Washington State created a video urging people to call in to protest. He states:**

The family unit is the first governmental system God ever ordained, and any legislation that seeks to do violence against the institution of the family unit must be forcefully rejected by common sense people everywhere. In January of this year, Senate Bill 5599 was introduced in the state legislature. This bill would allow children as young as 13 who are confused about their gender to leave their home, seek shelter at a government facility, and receive permanent and irreversible gender affirming treatment and surgery – all without their parents’ knowledge or consent.





## DISCERN: GOVERNMENT BECOMES PARENT

---

Pastor Johnson continues:

Let me be clear: SB 5599 represents the most radical and dangerous piece of anti-family, anti-Christ legislation that we have seen in the last 40 years in Washington state.

- It's against the law for a minor to use a tanning bed.
- It's against the law for a minor to get a tattoo.
- It's against the law for a minor to enter into a legally binding contract.
- It's against the law for a minor to buy tobacco products, and the list goes on and on.

But at the age of 13, if you want to permanently damage your body through gender reassignment surgery, start taking puberty blockers, and irreversibly harm your reproductive system, the state will house your child in a private government facility, prescribed medicine, and perform surgery – and then refuse to give you information about their whereabouts. **Oh, and by the way, they would fund this with your tax dollars. Friends this is an all-out demonic assault on parents children and the family unit.**

### Discussion Questions

7. What are the problems that you see with this bill?

8. In the bill, how is the government trying to superimpose its worldview on society?



## THE BIBLE: PARENTING RIGHTS

---

### Biblical Worldview #1: God gives the right for a parent to parent.

Instruction: Read the following scripture and answer the discussion questions.

#### Scripture

*"Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate." (Psalm 127:3–5, ESV)*

#### Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean that children are a *heritage* from Lord?

HERITAGE. Hebrew. *naḥalāh*: A feminine noun meaning possession, property, inheritance. This word implied property that was given by means of a will or as a heritage.

Warren Baker and Eugene E. Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), 722–723.

2. Why is this biblical worldview important?

3. When is this heritage from the Lord redefined? When does a parent no longer have authority over a child?

**"The child is not the mere  
creature of the state."  
–U.S. Supreme Court,  
*Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925)**



## THE BIBLE: PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES

---

### Biblical Worldview #2: God appoints the parent to be responsible.

Instruction: Read the following scripture and answer the discussion questions.

#### Scripture

*"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (Deuteronomy 6:4–9, ESV)*

#### Discussion Questions

4. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925): "The child is not the mere creature of the state." Who is ultimately responsible for the child?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How often is training of a child supposed to happen?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What should happen if a parent is not responsible? Who gets to define what responsible is?

**"Children represent God's  
most generous gift to us."  
–Dr. James C. Dobson**





## **THE BIBLE: THE PARENT IS A ROLE MODEL**

---

### **Biblical Worldview #3: Parents are to model Godly living.**

Instruction: Read the following scripture and answer the discussion questions.

#### **Scripture**

*"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."  
(Deuteronomy 6:4–7, ESV)*

#### **Discussion Questions**

7. What does the word *diligent* mean?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Why is modeling Godly living to your children so important?





## **THE BIBLE: THE PARENT IS A GATEKEEPER**

---

### **Biblical Worldview #4: Parents are to be the gatekeeper to help ensure Godly living.**

Instruction: Read the following scripture and answer the discussion questions.

#### **Scripture**

*"Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth; And put devious speech far from you. Let your eyes look directly ahead; And let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you. Watch the path of your feet; And all your ways will be established. Do not turn to the right nor to the left; Turn your foot from evil." (Proverbs 4:23–27, NASB95)*

#### **Discussion Questions**

9. What specific areas should parents teach their children to watch over their heart? Why?

10. What does it mean to watch "the path of your feet"? How can a parent help a child to watch the path of their feet?



**"Parents these days often feel guilty imposing their views on their children..."**  
**—George Barna**





## **THE BIBLE: PARENTS ARE NOT TO ABUSE THEIR CHILDREN**

### **Biblical Worldview #5: Parents are not to abuse their rights.**

Instruction: Read the following scripture and answer the discussion questions.

#### **Scripture**

*"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4, ESV)*

*"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea." (Mark 9:42, ESV)*

*"Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death." (Proverbs 19:18, ESV)*

*"Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged." (Colossians 3:21, ESV)*

*"Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed." (Romans 2:3–5, ESV)*

#### **Discussion Questions**

11. How does a parent's discipline influence a child to view God in the same way?
  
12. When a parent disciplines out of anger, how can a humble confession help restore the relationship?

**"Respect is intended to operate  
on a two-way street."  
—Dr. James C. Dobson**



# **THE BIBLE: PARENTS ARE NOT TO OUTSOURCE THEIR RESPONSIBILITY**

## **Biblical Worldview #6: Parents are not to outsource their responsibility.**

Instruction: Read the following scripture and answer the discussion questions.

### **Scripture**

*"Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck." (Proverbs 1:8–9, ESV)*

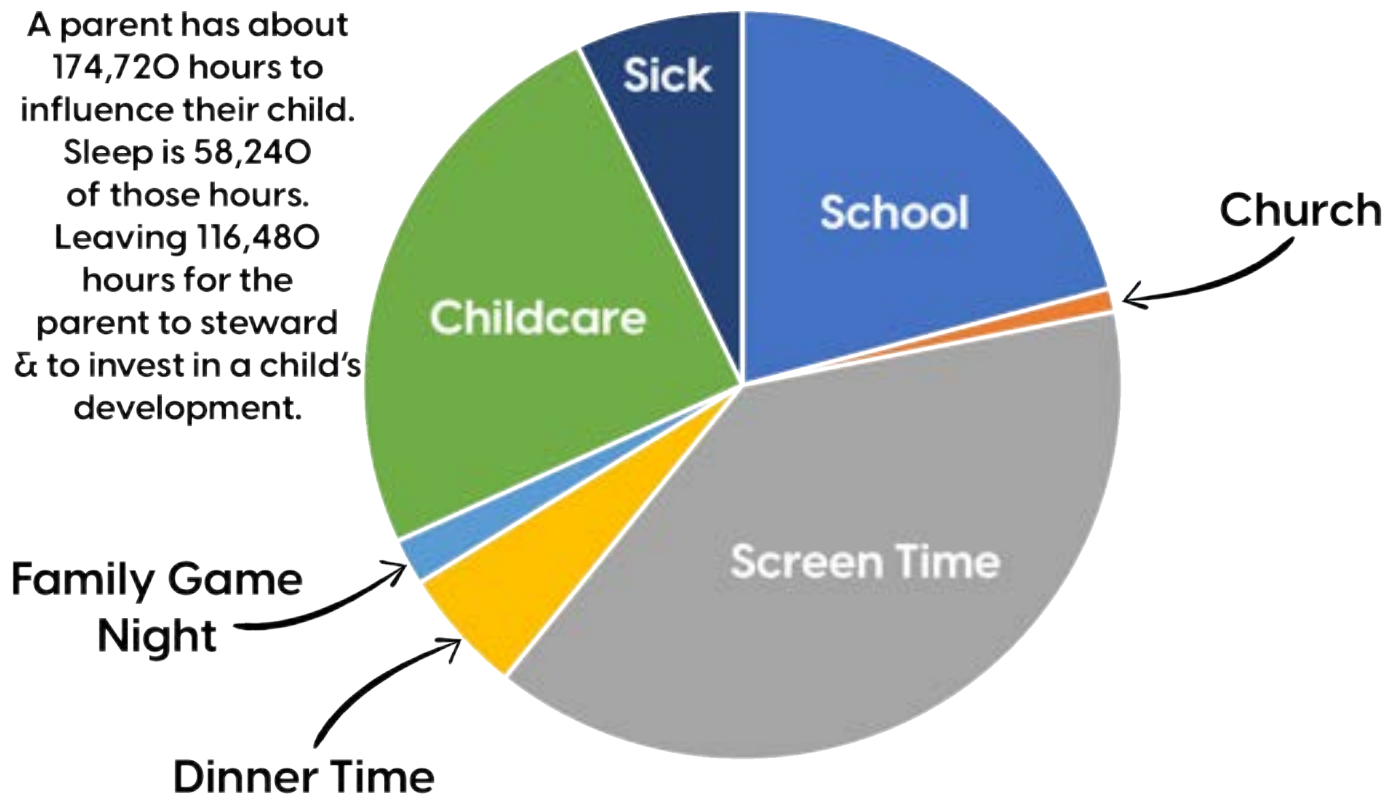
### **Discussion Questions**

13. Some parents outsource their responsibility to foster spiritual growth in their children to the Church. What are the effects of this on children? What has happened in our culture from doing this?

14. What are the effects of outsourcing education to secular government schools?

15. What are the effects of outsourcing spare time to "screens" having on our children?

A parent has about  
174,720 hours to  
influence their child.  
Sleep is 58,240  
of those hours.  
Leaving 116,480  
hours for the  
parent to steward  
& to invest in a child's  
development.





## THE LOGIC: DEFENDING PARENTAL AUTHORITY

---

Our fundamental question is: “Who has primary authority over a child – government, or parents?” We answer *parents*. How can we logically defend the primacy of parental rights? Dr. Melissa Moschella is the author of *To Whom Do Children Belong?* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), and she has written academic essays for *The Public Discourse* defending parental rights. Using Moschella as our source, we can create a general outline of the logical steps:

**Premise 1: As the biological cause of a child, parents have an intimate, irreplaceable, and permanent relationship with their child that no one else has.**

**Support for Premise 1:** In a hospital, if your baby were accidentally switched at birth, you would have every right to call for the return of your biological baby. But why? Humans are biological beings; by design, our identity is bodily, i.e., each person is a unity of body and soul, or “psycho-physical substance”. A biological relationship has innate value. From the very beginning at conception, there is a bond, a bodily connection of shared genetic heritage. Parents are the biological cause of a child; without them, the child would not exist, for the child came out of the bodily union of the parents. Such a relationship is identity defining. A biological relationship, then, is an intimate, irreplaceable, and permanent personal relationship. In contrast, the government does not construct a child. The government is not the biological cause of a child, and so it lacks this unique personal relationship, as well as the corresponding responsibilities, obligations, and authority to a child that emerge from this relationship, as explained below.

**Premise 2: This unique relationship gives parents moral obligations over a child.**

**Support for Premise 2:** Obligations are determined by the closeness of the relationship, and the parent-child relationship is intimately and uniquely close like no other. Every child is vulnerable and dependent: physically, emotionally, morally, and spiritually, and such dependencies generate obligations. “Relationships trigger special obligations,” and such a unique, close, and personal relationship as that of the parent-child relationship forms responsibilities to help develop a child with parents’ own special love. Moschella writes:

Being in a personal relationship with someone means that there are needs only you are fully competent to fulfill . . . No one else can love my biological children for me, or receive their love in my stead. Others can, of course, love those children very deeply, and be loved deeply by them in return. **But others’ love, no matter how deep, can never replace my love for them, and no one, no matter how lovable, can replace me as a specific object of my children’s love.** It is because biological parents stand in a permanent, unique and intimate relationship to their children as the cause of those children’s existence and identity, that they are irreplaceable to their children in this way. . . . This supports my claim that children really are personally dependent on their biological parents for the ideal fulfillment of their developmental needs. What this means is that biological parents have a weighty *prima facie* obligation to raise their children themselves, based on their absolute obligation to love their children.

Furthermore, by nature, all children (and even grown-ups) long for a healthy relationship with their mother and father; and not to have it is a primal wound, e.g., divorce, abandonment, abuse, neglect, etc. Such a relationship is core to one’s development and identity. As the norm, then, children should not be “cut-and-paste” into other relationships.





## THE LOGIC: DEFENDING PARENTAL AUTHORITY

---

**Conclusion:** Therefore, parents have an authority to protect their unique relationship and moral obligations with a child against any threats, even against the government.

**Support for the Conclusion:** Given the fact of a unique relationship, and given the fact that this unique relationship generates obligations to a child, parents, therefore, need authority in order to fulfill their obligations. Moschella refers to “a kind of sphere of sovereignty” and “a little sovereign community” that “has the right to direct its internal affairs free from coercive external interference, except in cases of abuse and neglect.” It is true that children have a relationship with the wider political community and government. But as she notes, it is *through* their parents that children have this relationship, not despite the parent-child relationship. A child’s relationship with parents is pre-political. Moschella writes:

Thus the fact that parents have the strongest and most direct obligation to raise their children to maturity implies that they are the ones with primary paternalistic authority over them . . . For it shows why and in what sense children naturally “belong” to their families, why separating children from their families robs them of important benefits and denies rightful authority to their parents . . . [S]ince parents, not the state, are the ones who have the closest personal relationship to their children and thus the strongest and most direct obligation for the well-being of those children, in part because the intimate relationship that they have with their children, makes them uniquely suited to meet their children’s developmental needs.

The benefits to the child are a unique love to help maturity as well as shape identity. Both common sense and social science overwhelmingly support the truth from human history that children do best when raised by their loving biological father and mother, all things being equal. Thus promoting the primacy of parental authority is for the common good of the child, the parents, and the society as a whole.

In simpler form, the argument above can be stated:

**Premise 1:** Biological cause forms a unique relationship.

**Premise 2:** A unique relationship forms obligations.

**Conclusion:** Thus, in order to fulfill those obligations, both authority and sovereignty are required, or what are also known as *parental rights*.

### Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree or disagree with these links? “Biological cause” to “unique relationship” to “moral obligations” to “authority to fulfill those obligations” to “some degree of sovereignty”?



## THE LOGIC: DEFENDING PARENTAL AUTHORITY

---

As a summary of Moschella's argument, here is a passage from her essay in *The Public Discourse*:

I've argued in the past that the uniqueness of the biological parent-child relationship can be understood in this light. Initially—that is, at conception—the child's biological parents are the people with whom that child has the closest personal relationship, the closest personal dependencies. They are, for that reason, the ones with the primary responsibility to take care of that child and therefore the ones with the primary authority to do so (unless they are incompetent to exercise that authority).

The special responsibility that biological parents have for their children is non-transferable because only biological parents can give to their children the benefit of their parental love. **The relationship between children and their biological parents is intimate, permanent, and identity-constituting. It defines the biological aspect of the child's identity—for if the child had different biological parents, he would not be the same person; indeed he would not exist at all.** Children do not miss being loved by those with whom they have no intimate relationship; the unique, irreplaceable intimacy of the parent-child relationship manifests itself in the fact that a child can miss the specific love and care of an absent biological parent, even when he is well-loved by (say) adoptive parents.

Moschella also links her argument to historic thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle:

When addressing the rights and obligations of parents in the *Summa Theologiae*, **Thomas Aquinas speaks of a child as in some sense "a part" of its parents and as "enfolded in the care of its parents," first physically in the mother's womb, and then in the "spiritual womb" of the family.** Aquinas's view is reminiscent of Aristotle's claim in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that "parents love their children as being a part of themselves, and children [ought to love] their parents as being something originating from them [parents]," as well as his basic understanding of the conjugal union, and the family that is built upon it, as a "natural community" (literally, "community corresponding to nature").

### Discussion Questions

2. Do you agree or disagree, per Aristotle, that parents ought to "love their children as being a part of themselves, and children [ought to love] their parents as being something originating from them [parents]"?





## **THE LOGIC: IS PARENTAL RIGHTS THE RIGHT ARGUMENT?**

Having explored Moschella's argument above, we turn now to the following article: "The Pitfalls of the Parents' Rights Argument" by Tom Sarrouf as published in Anchoring Truths: A James Wilson Institute Project. The publisher prefaces the article with this quotation:

Conservatives need to do more than appealing to "parental rights" to protect children and youth from the zealots of the LGBT agenda. It offers us no standing for protecting children whose parents would invoke such a right in defense of sexually mutilating them.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What do you think about this statement? What is true about it? What is false?
2. How might this logic be applied to other areas of parenting?

Sarrouf says:

It is now a common argument on the Right to invoke "parental rights" to resist the encroachment of DEI [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion] and LGBTQ+ [pro-homosexual, pro-transgender] ideology. ... Conservatives argue that parents have a right to determine how their children will be raised, regardless of what their children might think or what the state has to say about it. ... Conservative parents are concerned about the promotion of sexually explicit lifestyle choices in schools.

Sarrouf goes on to say:

The crux of the issue is reached when we ask the question, "for whom is this material inappropriate?" Is it only a matter of choice amongst equal choices, with some parents preferring their children to learn about the values of waiting until marriage to have sex, while others prefer to teach their children about the potential pleasure of engaging in unnatural sex, for example? Or do the parents who object to their children learning about certain sexual acts assert more than a preference in their objection, and draw a clear moral judgment against those acts? In that case, the answer to the above question—who should be shielded from this material?—is "every child."





## THE LOGIC: IS PARENTAL RIGHTS THE RIGHT ARGUMENT?

And why? Because it is inappropriate for a child to exercise his or her sexual faculties before the child can understand the proper use and function of them, or have any need for using them, and to teach about the topic carries moral hazard that might result in irresponsible decisions based on the child's impulses; to promote any such behavior is certainly immoral.

I will not dive into an extended argument that it may be a short step from teaching children that sex is pleasurable and safe when there is consent to arguing that children can consent to sex at earlier ages, thus clearing the way for legitimizing pedophilia. I will only note the "Law of Merited Impossibility," which told us that men would never enter women's bathrooms and locker rooms, and that later, it would be great when it finally did happen, as we have now seen across the country. So also has the ratchet moved on every social issue in the last 60 years.

As Sarrouf notes, it is true that some parents fail, e.g., in cases of abuse or neglect, because they have stepped outside of the transcendent standards of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. Those standards overarch all people, and so parents are not the highest authority. Like a ladder, authority is hierarchical. **All earthly authority is always derivative from some higher source.**



The ultimate allegiance of our hearts should be higher up, and to God alone:

- Government is one authority, but not the highest authority.
- Teachers are one authority, but not the highest authority.
- Pastors are one authority, but not the highest authority.
- Parents are one authority, but not the highest authority.

All law must square with God's authority, which overarches all people in all times and in all places. "An unjust law is no law at all." Above human law is God. Above parental authority is God. Unaided by faith, we know His standards by way of the natural moral law – a law known by conscience and written on every heart. **And so even parents, like all people, are to be "One Family Under God," i.e., humble to God.**





## DEBATE: GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

---

The Parental Rights Foundation (ParentalRights.org) warns parents about the threat from government:

Many government actors and agencies today are working overtime to substitute a parent's decisions with the government worker's own view of what is best for a given child. From schools to hospitals to child welfare investigators, "experts" think they know what's best for your child better than you do.

And while this has been going on for decades, we have all become painfully aware of it since the recent [Covid] Pandemic, when many learned for the first time just how much power the government wants to have over our children.

**Yet, every child is unique; no one knows or loves a child better than his or her own parents. Mom or Dad, you are the expert on your child.**

To mention a specific area of controversy: What about in education? Moschella writes:

Allowing parents to exercise broad discretionary authority in the education of their children is also by and large in the best interests of children. Each child is unique, and parents are the ones most likely to know and care about what will be best for a particular child. Further, it can be confusing and detrimental to the moral and psychological development of children to learn conflicting values at home and at school. Thus, it is important for children's healthy development that parents be able to exempt their children from aspects of the curriculum to which they have moral objections. They should also to be able to choose schools that are in sync with the values they are teaching their children at home.

Granted, it is true that parents surrender a certain amount of autonomy and authority when they enroll their children in government schools, and so many millions of parents across the nation have chosen to homeschool their children or enroll them in private schools. In doing so, they preserve authority over their children, help protect innocence, can customize the education according to each child's gifts and interests, and maintain a central role in shaping the virtues and character of each child.



**But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.**

**—Jesus of Nazareth,  
Matthew 19:6 (ESV)**



## DEBATE: INCULCATING VIRTUE

---

Remember: In shaping the character of our children, our goal as Christians is not moralism or behaviorism or legalism – merely acting correctly. Instead, we aim more deeply to foster character qualities that reflect the new man, a regenerated heart with God’s presence. So, we must point them to Christ for forgiveness and growth in grace. We do not want our children to merely realize an external, superficial character, surface obedience, or “polish”. We want them to experience the lasting and deeply rooted reality of a new heart.

How do we teach such virtue? In his Foreword to the book *Standing on the Shoulders of Hobbits* (2012), Peter J. Kreeft offers a summary of five historical answers to the question: “How do we become good or evil?”

When Plato asked in his *Meno* how human beings become good (virtuous), he suggested four ways:

- (1) by teaching (“knowledge is virtue”);
- (2) by practice (forming habits);
- (3) by nature (i.e., being born virtuous);
- (4) in some other way (i.e., against nature, by force).

Most philosophers—Oriental as well as Western—give one of these four answers: Plato, #1; Confucius, #1 and #2; Aristotle, #2; Rousseau and Lao Tzu, #3; Hobbes and the “Realists,” #4.

All these philosophers are wrong, probably because most of them do not have children. Parents and children know the answer: [#5] by example. By having moral heroes.

Some of the greatest moral examples of virtue are a loving mom and a courageous dad. Children can witness and experience these parental virtues first-hand, and then practice for themselves.

### Discussion Questions

1. How might parents increase their child’s biblical worldview?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How do we inculcate virtue? Do you agree or disagree with the quotation from Kreeft?



## DEBATE: PARENTS ARE WATCHMEN FOR ALL THE CHILDREN

---

### **It is time to call evil – evil.**

*"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20, ESV)*

### **It is time to watch over all children**

*"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul." (Ezekiel 3:17–19, ESV)*

### **It is time to see what is going on and speak up.**

*"His watchmen are blind; they are all without knowledge; they are all silent dogs; they cannot bark, dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber." (Isaiah 56:10, ESV)*

### **It is time to pull down the strongholds in our culture.**

*"A wise man scales the city of the mighty and brings down the stronghold in which they trust." (Proverbs 21:22, ESV)*

### **It is time to pull down the strongholds in our culture.**

*"Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." (Jeremiah 29:7, NIV)*

*"But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare." (Jeremiah 29:7, ESV)*

### **Discussion Questions**

3. How has God entrusted you to be a watchman over children?

4. One key resource for legal and practical involvement is **ParentalRights.org**. What areas in our culture today do you feel the Lord leading you to speak up about?

5. How might you pray for your city?



## **DEBATE: PARENTAL BILL OF RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Write a Parental Bill of Rights. What rights should a parent have? What responsibilities do parents have? Why should they have this right and responsibility?

### **Parental Rights & Responsibilities**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

**How I will defend this R&R:**

2. \_\_\_\_\_

**How I will defend this R&R:**

3. \_\_\_\_\_

**How I will defend this R&R:**

4. \_\_\_\_\_

**How I will defend this R&R:**

5. \_\_\_\_\_

**How I will defend this R&R:**

6. \_\_\_\_\_

**How I will defend this R&R:**

7. \_\_\_\_\_

**How I will defend this R&R:**

# Family Policy Institute

OF WASHINGTON

PO Box 975, Lynnwood, WA 98046  
Phone: 425.608.0242 | FPIW.org



**OUR EVERGREEN STATE**  
needs you to protect:

- Life
- Marriage
- Parental Rights
- Religious Liberty

**We are stronger with one voice.**

**Join the Team.**  
**Become a DEFENDER today.**

**FPIW.ORG**



TOGETHER WE WILL

**DEFEND & ADVANCE**

BIBLICAL VALUES IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE