Standing Up for Your Child without Stepping on Toes
Discussion Guide

Chapter 1: In the Beginning

What was your first (or one of your first) experiences with standing up for your child when no one else would? Did you hesitate, or were you confident and without apology?

Do you have any regrets about how you’ve advocated for your child in the past? What do you wish you’d done differently?

Do you believe it’s possible to stand up for your child without stepping on toes? Why or why not?

Chapter 2: The Perfect Advocate

Who first modeled for you how to stand up for your rights or for what you believe? How has this shaped the way you advocate for your children?

What can you learn from God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit about advocacy? How does God protect us in a way that you can imitate?

You’re not going to be a perfect advocate, but you’re probably the example your children will follow. What can you do differently to make that example more Christlike?

Chapter 3: The Buddy, the Bully, and the Hero

Are you more of a Buddy, a Bully, or a Hero? Which of your tendencies get in the way of effectively standing up for your child? Which help?
What strengths from the other styles might help you get what your child needs? How could you develop those strengths?

If you’re married and your spouse displays a polar-opposite stand-up style, what ground rules can you agree on to present a united front during advocacy?

**Chapter 4: Once upon a Time**

How do you feel about sharing your story? What’s the worst thing that could happen if you did? Are you afraid to appear weak? Is it an “ugly” story? How could telling your story paint you in a more accurate light?

Have you ever found common ground by listening to someone else’s story? If so, what happened?

How do you tend to react when someone violates your trust? Has this ever happened when you tried to stand up for your child? What was the result?

Have you ever been guilty of one of the following while trying to stand up for your child? If so, what was the result? How might you restore any damage done because of that choice?

- talking behind your opponent’s back
- spreading a rumor or holding your tongue when a false accusation is uttered
- playing good cop/bad cop with your spouse in a meeting about your child
- conveniently missing an appointment set up by the opposing party
- not answering a phone call, e-mail, or letter
- going over the other person’s head instead of following the chain of command
Chapter 5: Knowing When to Step in

Do you usually find it hard or easy to decide whether to intervene on behalf of your child? Which of the following factors would you find most important in making your decision? If possible, describe a time when you considered one or more of these factors.

- low or high stakes
- friendly or hostile territory
- “instant” or “cooked”
- volunteer or drafted
- urgent or timeless
- alone or partnered
- nagging or not

Have you ever been fearful when faced with a chance to stand up for your child? What frightened you?

At each stage we can offer our kids opportunities to stand up for themselves. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest), how hard is that for you? If you’ve tried it, how has it worked out?

How can you stop being—or avoid becoming—a helicopter parent?

Chapter 6: A Match Made in Heaven

Have you ever been affected by someone who said one thing but did another? How did you feel about that?

Which of the following “shadowy stand-up practices” mentioned in this chapter have you tried? What happened?

- The Workaround
- Secret Identities
• Burying Information
• Claiming Ignorance

In each of the following situations, how could you match what you say and do in a way that promotes a positive reputation for you and your faith?
  • You promise to keep a record of how much time your child spends on homework.
  • Your child gets more soccer playing time, but at the expense of another team member.
  • You abruptly hang up the phone on your pediatrician’s receptionist when she says the doctor is too busy to answer your question.

Describe a time when you asked for help in standing up for your child. Did you receive it? Why or why not?

Chapter 7: Asking for Directions

What kind of advice is hardest for you to request? Why?

What do you learn from the stories of Jenny and Andrea? Can you share a similar experience?

Which of the following questions do you need to ask soon in order to help your child? Explain.
  • a question for clarification
  • a question that provokes thought
  • a question to enlist help
If your child had a peanut allergy, what questions would you need to ask each of the following people?

- your pediatrician
- the school principal
- your child
- the school nurse
- the parent of a child who has a similar condition

Chapter 8: Putting Your Best Face Forward

Which do you use more often: concealers or highlighters? Give an example.

Are you most like the Joker, Peter Pan, or the Action Figure? If you recognize yourself in any of these, how can you downplay some of those personality traits in order to be a more effective advocate for your child?

If you’ve ever had to “get in someone’s face” on behalf of your child, share that experience with the group. Do you believe it turned out to be a win-win situation? If not, why not?

Chapter 9: Learning to Stand Aside

If your goal is for your children to stand for themselves, how can you teach them to do that?

How would you rate your child’s progress (A, B, C, D, F) during the past year in each of the following areas of independence?

- initiative
- responsibility
- self-confidence
- diligence
Share a time when you let your child stand on his own, even if he fell flat on his face. What did you and he learn from the situation? What could you both do differently next time?

How do you feel about the following statement? “Our influence as parents is temporary. There comes a time when that influence must decrease.”

Chapter 10: When Your Best Isn’t Good Enough

Have you ever had to step aside and watch as someone else took your place in your child’s life? How did it feel?

What might get in the way of remembering that you are “good enough, smart enough, and skilled enough” to stand up for your child?

What challenges do you face right now in standing up for your child? If you’re divorced, a noncustodial parent, or in a newly blended family, how is advocacy especially difficult?

Do extended family members care for your children on a regular basis? What advocacy challenges does that present for you?

What will it take to feel confident in the certainty of your calling when the odds are against you? Do you believe that God equips those He calls? Why or why not?