

**POWERFUL PARENTING PRINCIPLES  
FROM THE CREATOR OF FAMILIES**



**LEAD**

**YOUR FAMILY**

**LIKE JESUS**

**NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR**

**KEN BLANCHARD**

**PHIL HODGES**

**& TRICIA GOYER**

**FOCUS<sup>SM</sup>  
ON THE FAMILY**

After 2,000 years Jesus remains the most influential leader in the history of the human race. He has changed family life like no other. In this wonderful book, Ken Blanchard along with Phil Hodges and Tricia Goyer show how Jesus can change *your* family to make it a life-giving, heart-expanding, soul-forming community of greatness.

—JOHN ORTBERG

Senior Pastor, Menlo Park Presbyterian Church; author of *Who Is This Man?*

If I were asked to pick only one book that would be required reading for every Christ-centered family, it would be this one. *Lead Your Family Like Jesus* is not only a game-changer, but a family-changer.

—TOMMY SPAULDING

*The New York Times* bestselling author of *It's Not Just Who You Know*

I wish I'd had the simple but powerful and persuasive insights offered by Ken, Phil, and Tricia in *Lead Your Family Like Jesus* when I was raising my son. Nonetheless, because I am convinced that they “nailed” it with this magnificent offering, I intend to purchase several copies of this gem in order to share it with my young mentees as they begin their parenting years. Frankly, I suspect it will be considered their favorite gift of the new year.

—COLLEEN BARRETT

President Emeritus, Southwest Airlines Co.

Ken Blanchard has spent his lifetime studying leadership. *Lead Your Family Like Jesus* is a fresh and original approach to leadership. Filled with practical parables and good advice, this is a book worth reading.

—BOB BUFORD

Author, *Halftime* and *Finishing Well*

There is no greater leadership charge than the one God gives us to influence the thinking, behavior, and development of our children. It's through our life role leadership we are positioned to teach our children how to reflect the heart and beauty of Christ in the world. *Lead Your Family Like Jesus* illuminates the example of Jesus and provides all the wisdom parents need to raise up Christ-centered servant leaders. Every parent *must* read this book to understand how to steward well the sacred trust they've been given.

—TAMI HEIM

President and CEO, Christian Leadership Alliance

I wish this book was available twenty-two years ago when our first child was born. It would have been the best baby shower gift ever given. I know what gift I'm giving to all new parents!

—DINA DWYER-OWENS

Chairwoman and CEO, The Dwyer Group; mother of Dani and Mikey

As a pastor, I'm always looking for helpful and practical resources for families. *Lead Your Family Like Jesus* is phenomenal. The twelve principles presented in this incredible read are wise, biblical, encouraging, and transforming. It's rare to find one book with so many relational gems. The best part is that these grace-filled truths are applicable to every family situation. I have been a Blanchard and Hodges fan for years; this book is one of their best!

—KURT BUBNA

Lead Pastor, Eastpoint Church, Spokane Valley, Washington

In very relatable ways, *Lead Your Family Like Jesus* takes readers on an engaging ride into the heart of what the Lord asks of us as parents. With Ken, Phil, and Trish being so vulnerable with their own stories—woven around both Scripture and sharing from other parents with similar challenges and triumphs—I felt like I was right there, parenting alongside them. This is a must-read for moms and dads looking for real-life encouragement to be an even better version of themselves—the version God is calling them to be!

—JIM HAUSKEY

Marketing Director, DaySpring

*Lead Your Family Like Jesus* is a book that deserves a prominent place on every family's bookshelf. Engaging from the first page, each chapter shares unique, valuable insight from the authors. As a mother and grandmother, I discovered new ways to put essential biblical principles of leading into action—and I'm already seeing results. No matter where you are in life, *Lead Your Family Like Jesus* meets you where you are today. Be prepared to refer to this wonderful volume time and time again!

—SHERRY GORE

Editor-in-chief, *Cooking & Such* magazine

Ken and Phil, and this time with Tricia Goyer, have done it again! Their new book, *Lead Your Family Like Jesus*, is incredible. It is a must read for all parents of every age.

—JIM BLANCHARD

Chairman of the Board, Jordan-Blanchard Capital, LLC

**KEN BLANCHARD  
PHIL HODGES  
& TRICIA GOYER**

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**FOCUS<sup>®</sup>**  
ON THE FAMILY



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# To Lead Is to Serve

What person—living or dead—has most influenced your thinking, behavior, and path in life? Was it your mother? Your father? A coach? A teacher?

The person you just named was a leader in your life, regardless of his or her formal title. If, as most people do, you named a family member or friend, you can see that leaders with titles and positions of authority make up only part of the leadership landscape.

Why? Because leadership is an influence process. In fact:

*Any time you seek to influence the thinking, behavior, or development of people in their personal or professional lives, you take on the role of a leader.*

When you think about it this way, all of us are leaders in every aspect of life. That is why most leadership that shapes us doesn't come from those with boxes on an organizational chart; it comes from those we encounter in everyday life. That's where our focus will be in this book: on your role as a leader in your family. The truth is, being a parent is probably the most important life-role leadership position you'll ever have, and it begins when you assume responsibility for raising a child. Yet most people have no training or framework to help them be the best parents possible.



This book is here to help change that. We'll show how the example and teachings of Jesus two thousand years ago apply to the busy lives of ordinary moms and dads today. By looking at Jesus, you can learn how to build a loving relationship with your children and extended family—no matter how you were raised and no matter what challenges your family faces.

Those challenges are all around us. In too many families love has been distorted to “you don't love me unless you [fill in the blank],” rather than the unconditional loving that Jesus modeled. Self-promotion (pride) and self-protection (fear) have replaced love and vulnerability. We're afraid to give our whole hearts to others because we don't want to be hurt. Indifference moves in and intimacy is replaced with isolation.

The good news is that there's a better way. There's a perfect leadership role model you can trust. His name is Jesus. All families matter to Him. The big question is, does Jesus matter in your family? We'll be exploring this question with you throughout the book.

When Jesus used a towel and basin to wash the disciples' feet (John 13:1-17), He modeled leadership as an act of service. Service means thinking of others before ourselves. It means giving rather than receiving.

Two people who exemplified servant leadership in the life of Jesus were His mother, Mary, and His stepfather, Joseph.

Mary had no material wealth, yet she was rich with a servant's heart. She responded to the call to become the earthly parent of the Savior by saying, “I am the Lord's servant. . . . May it be to me as you have said” (Luke 1:38). With that declaration she set the highest standard for a heart surrendered for service. In her life-role as a mother, Mary was positioned to have major influence on her child. The relationship between a serving mother and son was part of God's plan of preparation for Jesus' own season of earthly leadership. Mary passed on to her son important lessons about obedience, submission, faith, and service.

Joseph overcame all the pride and fear issues involved in accepting Mary as his wife and Jesus as his child to rear. Although the Bible does not record anything Joseph said, his actions—providing for the physical and spiritual well-being of his family—display the nature of his heart.

The book of Luke sums up the combined results of these humble, faith-centered parents:

*Then he [Jesus] went down to Nazareth with them [Mary and Joseph] and was obedient to them. . . . And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Luke 2:51-52)*

God tested Mary and Joseph and found the hearts of servants. No wonder He chose His Son to be raised by such parents.

God has gifted you with your children. Will you nurture them with a servant heart, as Mary and Joseph nurtured Jesus?

### **LEADING IS SERVING**

What does leading with a servant heart look like in a family? Imagine the following situations; each describes someone engaged in an act of family leadership.

- A mother caring for a child during the day
- A father listening to his children's nighttime prayers
- Parents helping a teenager walk through unplanned pregnancy
- A husband and wife modeling their faith in God in the face of the loss of a job
- An adult son providing guidance on living arrangements for his aging parents
- A terminally ill sibling showing grace, confidence, courage, and calm to anxious loved ones

These family leaders are making personal choices about how and to what end they will use their influence. When it comes to decisions like these, each of us must decide:

*Am I seeking to serve God and the well-being of my family members, or am I seeking my own self-interest?*

When parents lead like Jesus, they serve God and others with love as the ultimate goal. As a result, children gain character-building skills and self-worth, and family relationships thrive!

## THE FOUR DOMAINS

Leading your family like Jesus, you learn to align four leadership domains: your heart, your head, your hands, and your habits.

Heart: *The character and the values* you employ as you lead and influence your children.

Head: *Your viewpoint and beliefs* about leading and influencing your children.

Hands: *What you actually do* when leading and influencing your children.

Habits: *How you continually refocus your desire* to lead and influence your children as Jesus would have you do.

When these areas align, leading becomes a joy—and you and your family experience feelings of safety, security, and satisfaction. When these areas are out of alignment, dissatisfaction and distrust result. In the following pages we'll discuss how these domains get out of whack and how to bring them back into alignment—something we all need from time to time!

## OUR STORIES

I'm delighted that Phil Hodges and Tricia Goyer have joined me in discussing how to lead like Jesus in the family. Phil was the coauthor of the original *Lead*

*Like Jesus* book. A grandfather *par excellence*, he has been a dear friend for more than fifty years. Tricia Goyer is the award-winning author of hundreds of articles and dozens of books on Christian themes. As a mom—and one-time unwed mother—she brings an important perspective to this subject.

My experience in leading a family with my wife, Margie, spans fifty years. Phil and Jane have celebrated their forty-fifth anniversary. Contrast this with Tricia and John, who have celebrated twenty-three years of marriage. We hope that the three of us, sharing from our unique viewpoints, can give you a well-rounded picture of what it looks like when we let Jesus guide our families.

We also hope that in reading this book you'll experience Jesus in a new and different way. As you read our stories and see these principles in action, we believe you'll grow to trust Jesus as the perfect role model to follow. But this can happen only if you surrender all of your life—even your family life—to Him. It's easier said than done, but this is the key:

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6)*

*Lead Your Family Like Jesus* will help you take Christ out of the separate compartment of your private spiritual life and give Him free rein in all your daily actions and relationships. It's not a textbook, but rather a collection of stories and advice about how we let Jesus guide our attitudes, actions, and behaviors in our families—sometimes with miraculous results.

We've divided the book into twelve chapters. Phil, Tricia, and I will take turns discussing different aspects of the heart, head, hands, and habits of leading your family like Jesus. We've also included the input of other parents, allowing them to share their triumphs and struggles. I hope you'll enjoy these stories and through them see how leading like Jesus can bring limitless blessings to your family.

—KEN BLANCHARD

Coauthor, *The One Minute Manager*<sup>®</sup> and *Lead Like Jesus*





## PART I

# THE HEART

Leading like Jesus as a parent is first a spiritual matter.

Whenever you have an opportunity to influence the thinking and behavior of other family members, the first question you have to answer is, “Am I motivated by self-interest or by the betterment of those I’m leading?”

The answer to that question starts on the inside; it’s a heart issue. If you don’t get the heart right, you simply won’t become a parent who leads like Jesus.

In Part I, Ken shows how a disaster gave him the long-term perspective Jesus has—and that every parent needs. Phil explains how an unChristlike kind of EGO—Edging God Out—causes us to make choices that hurt our families. Tricia describes how we can do the opposite with another kind of EGO—Exalting God Only—a pattern Jesus set.



# Important Forever

## PRINCIPLE 1

### To Lead Like Jesus, Have an Eternal Perspective

*Through His words and actions, Jesus taught that what people carry in their hearts is far more important than what they wear on their backs or where they lay their heads. He knew our hearts would be where our treasures are (Matthew 6:21). In his story about a major loss, Ken describes how he learned to take the long view—and how that view can revolutionize your parenting.*

The voice message came when Margie and I were in Florida on an October day in 2007. She was at a conference in Orlando; I was in Naples playing golf with a bunch of old Cornell buddies. I got up a bit before 7:00 and checked my cell phone for messages. There was only one. It was from our son, Scott:

“Mom, Dad, I don’t know where you are, but Mad and I had to evacuate our house. When we got down the road, we looked up and there were flames coming out of our place, and I think yours is gone, too. It’s just awful.”

That was my greeting for the day. The San Diego fires—which we’d last heard were thirty-five miles from our home—had reached our doorstep. It looked as if they’d consumed it.

Frankly, Margie and I were sadder for our son than we were for ourselves. Scott and his wife, Madeleine, had just finished a ten-month remodel of their house. They’d done it with such love and care, and had just moved in. They’d created a happy home for their family.



Margie and I prayed. We asked God that if one house could be spared, it would be theirs.

Next day I was driving with my friend and coauthor Phil Hodges when I got the call from Scott.

“Dad, you won’t believe it!” he shouted. “I’m standing in our living room and our house was saved!”

Our prayer had been answered! The front doormat and some towels on the back deck had been charred—and the houses on both sides had burned to the ground. But Scott and Madeleine’s house had been spared.

Scott’s tone turned serious. “I’m afraid your house is gone, Dad.”

“Scott, that’s exactly what Mom and I prayed would happen!” I shouted, laughing and crying with happiness.

It mattered less that our house was gone. I was so overjoyed by Scott’s news that we pulled the car over by the beach. Phil and I got out and ran along the shore shouting, “Lord, You’re unbelievable!” Phil got a picture of me with my hands in the air and a great grin on my face.

Maybe my reaction was influenced by some reading I’d been doing. I’d just finished John Ortberg’s wonderful book *When the Game Is Over, It All Goes Back in the Box*. John has a marvelous exercise in the book that goes like this:

It’s 4:00 in the afternoon and you’re getting ready to go home. There are two piles of Post-It notes on your desk. One says *Important Forever* and the other says *Temporary Stuff*. Put a Post-It from one of the two piles on everything you notice as you leave—the computer, your desk, your administrative assistant, the Coke machine, your receptionist, your car. Then do the same when you get home—on your bicycle, your golf clubs, people, and things in the house.

After the fire, it was clear to Margie and me where those sticky notes should go. What’s really *Important Forever* is who you love and who loves you. We knew God was with us and what was really important in life, even as we walked through the ashes. Our family was safe. Even our dog was safe and being cared for by a friend. We’d lost a lot of temporary stuff, including many precious

mementos, but we had each other. We still had our children, our grandchildren, our friends, and our coworkers.

## Pause & Reflect

- What is the *Temporary Stuff* in your life? What is *Important Forever*?
- As a leader of your family, are you focusing on what's temporary—or on what will last?

### WHAT DID JESUS DO?

Jesus knew all about that kind of eternal perspective:

“Don't hoard treasure down here where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by rust or—worse!—stolen by burglars. Stockpile treasure in heaven, where it's safe from moth and rust and burglars. It's obvious, isn't it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being.” (Matthew 6:19-21, MSG)

Just knowing about the long-term view wasn't enough for Jesus, of course. Everything He did was about the forever benefits, and He calls us to do the same:

Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we'd better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on *Jesus*, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: cross, shame, whatever. And now he's *there*, in the place of honor, right alongside God. When you find yourselves

flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. *That* will shoot adrenaline into your souls! (Hebrews 12:1-3, MSG)

### HOLDING LOOSELY, CLINGING TIGHTLY

For many years Margie and I had a vision for our family, and those beliefs came out through our actions. We believed our house was not our own, that God had given it to us for His use. When we lost it, we mourned for the dwelling. But we also rejoiced in the ways God had allowed us to use it to care for others.

Because we wanted to celebrate all the good times, we held a memorial celebration for our house. The purpose of our service was to talk about the good times people had there. More than 100 people attended! Over the course of twenty-five years, individuals and families had lived in our home for two, three, or even more months. It was wonderful to have others talk about a party they remembered, or how they'd lived there during a tough time. They shared how it felt to be in our home. We immersed ourselves in what had been great about that house and all the memories we'd built there.



*There are temporary things that always need to be done—cleaning, cooking, bathing, etc.—but I also like to focus on things that last forever, like spending time with others, serving others, making sure to praise my children, teaching them godly principles, and educating them.*

—MARTHA, mother of four

At the end of that event, our daughter, Debbie—who has quite the sense of humor—spoke. “You know, I used to go to my parents’ house,” she said. “And I would look in the closets and the garage and would think, *When something happens to them, it’s going to be my job to clean this all out!* And I don’t have to do that now!”

Her comment may have seemed flippant, but in many ways it just reflected this reality: Even though our material things were gone, the memories were still with us. Our lives had been lightened. What we carried in our hearts was something that could never be taken away. And the service we gave to others in that house would forever be carried with them. No fire could destroy that.

### CHERISHING THOSE YOU LOVE

It's easy to focus our time and efforts on things—jobs, houses, activities. But in times like the fire we learn that what we carry in our hearts and relationships is what lasts. Margie and I were challenged to hold things loosely and cherish people—particularly our family and one another. We were reminded that God's love is another thing that lasts; a fire can't take it away.

Peter Drucker once said that nothing good ever happens by accident. If you want something good to happen, he advised, put some structure around it. So let me give you some practical ways to act on the eternal perspective by cherishing your family. We have a few traditions that might inspire you.

*Birthday Blessings.* On every family member's birthday, we have a family gathering. As part of the celebration, we sit at the dining room table. One by one, each of us tells the person whose birthday it is what we really love and cherish about him or her. Our kids, Scott and Debbie, used to protest this tradition. But today they encourage their kids to take part in it, too.

*Christmas Recital.* Between dinner and dessert on Christmas Day, all our family and friends who are gathered share something special with everyone. They can sing a song, recite a poem, or tell us something important in their lives. This not only delights all those who are gathered, it makes the day memorable and meaningful.

*Date Night.* Margie's brother, Tom, and his wife, Jill, try to schedule a date night every week, when they get a babysitter and have a night just for themselves. There is no focus on their work or kids, just on their relationship. What a wonderful way to cherish each other!



*Our Christmas Eve tradition started when our daughter was ten months old. It includes my husband reading the Christmas story from our family Bible while [we drink] hot chocolate. We also read a version of “The Night Before Christmas.” As the kids have gotten older, they want to read the story from the Bible. We look forward to it every year!*

—REGINA, mother of two

*My husband and I are very intentional about having a weekly (almost always) date night. Our kids know that it is a time for the two of us. Our eldest also has seen that we take time for our marriage by going to marriage conferences to keep “tuned up.” Our whole household tells each other “I love you” whenever we are leaving. We want the last thing heard from us to be something kind and “forever,” in case Jesus takes us home before we see each other again.*

—ALLISON, mom of three

## ETERNAL LIFE, ABUNDANT LIFE

You may be thinking, *Was having your house burn to the ground really such a positive experience? It’s nice that you learned a lesson, but didn’t you have at least a little trouble with this disaster?*

Of course we did. And dealing with it meant taking a more eternal, God-centered perspective, too. As I tried to process the loss of our house and all our things, I thought of one of my favorite Bible verses:

*“I came that they may have life and that they may have it abundantly.” (John 10:10, ESV)*

Just before the fire, I’d been studying another John passage with my Bible teacher and friend, Rich Case:

*“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)*

During this study I’d asked Rich, “What did Jesus mean by abundant life?”

“Jesus wants us to have joy, peace, and righteousness,” Rich had said. “Any time you don’t feel joyful or peaceful or right with God, you’re probably going it your own way and you’re detached from the vine.”

As the reality of losing our home and everything in it sank in, Margie and I weren’t very joyful or peaceful. After I shared with Margie what I’d learned from Rich, we put our hands out and said, “Lord, we really need You. We can’t make it through this by ourselves.” With that thought constantly in our minds, we were able to maintain a peaceful feeling in the days and weeks that followed. Jesus met us in our time of need.

And that’s the key to leading a family like Jesus—not only following His example, but relying on His presence within us. It’s our lives connected to His.

We parents can try to give and serve in our own strength, but we won’t get very far. It’s His heart we’re striving for. When we find His heart, He will transform ours. We can turn to Him during the hardest times of family life, and He’ll be there, giving us the peace to make it through—and reminding us what’s most important.



*I have three kids. One has Asperger’s and the other two are strong-willed. It is a necessity that I ask Jesus to walk with me. So each morning before my feet touch the floor, I pray. I ask Jesus to be tangible, to help me be able to hear His voice over the chaos that sometimes swallows my day.*

—HEATHER, mother of three

*We aim—though we often fail—to include Christ in every aspect of our daily living. I pray first thing in the morning. My wife and son read the*

*Bible together during home preschool time. We pray at meals—not just as a routine, but with intentional hearts together as a family. We pray when we need help and we try to remember to praise as quickly as we can. As a family, we know we need Him, and we’re trying to work together to remind each other to go to Him first. We end our day together as a family, reading our “goodnight” books and Scripture.*

—JOEY, father of two

When we lost our house, in the world’s eyes we’d lost everything—but Margie and I knew better. We’d spent twenty-five years caring for the things in our home. In the end, Margie and I—and the family we built—are what stood. That’s what the foundation of leading your family like Jesus is all about: focusing on who you love and who loves you.

Leading your family like Jesus focuses on what’s really important.

And it all starts in the heart.

## Pause & Reflect

- Tonight, thank God for giving you a family and a chance to parent.
- Write a prayer telling God you’re a willing servant for your family. As you’re preparing that prayer, do an honest assessment of how often you’re a servant leader in your family—and how often you’re a self-serving leader.