

The logo features the text '50/50' in a large, bold, teal sans-serif font. A teal diagonal slash is positioned between the two '50's, extending from the top right of the first '50' to the top left of the second '50'.

50/50

A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN  
THE CHURCH AND FAMILY

50/50

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*Over 50% of kids who grow up in church eventually walk away from their faith. We are not okay with that! 50/50 is a partnership between the church and family to lead kids into an authentic faith they will never walk away from.*

## INTRODUCTION

Over 50% of kids who grow up in church

eventually walk away from their faith. Pause and let that sink in for a second. That is horrible! Statistically speaking, over half of the kids growing up in our church right now will walk away from their faith. Let it sink in a little deeper by realizing that could be one of your kids! None of us want that for our children.

50/50 is a strategic effort to partner with you in discipling your kids. We will dig into the details later in the book, but for now we want you to know that we are with you and we want to help your family connect to a strategy that will lead your kids into an authentic faith they will never walk away from.

In the next few chapters we will cover several

topics to help you reorient your focus around a truly intentional family discipleship model and choose to live a countercultural life that leads your kids to have a genuine heart for God. We will discuss five lies parents often believe, three transformational environments our kids must experience, and practical ideas for beating the odds that are against us.

CHAPTER 1

# FIVE LIES PARENTS OFTEN BELIEVE

**LIE #1: Giving my kids good experiences will lead to good kids.**

As parents, we naturally want the best for our children. We want them to have the best experiences, the best opportunities, the best extracurriculars, etc. We innately want to give them the things we never had ourselves and we don't want them to miss out on anything their friends are experiencing. By ensuring they have a life full of good experiences we hope they will be good kids. But herein lies the bigger question



we must ask ourselves: Is our goal to develop “good” kids? As followers of Jesus, have we lowered the bar of discipleship and expectation to the point where general moral compliance is the signpost for success? I think we would all agree that what we desire in our relationship with Christ is ultimately the same as what we want our kids to experience. We want a life of love, justice, mercy, and obedience to flow from a daily, abiding relationship with Christ.

***Our goal is to develop kids who are intimately in love with Jesus, not just “good.” Kids who don’t just choose what is right because they’ve learned to comply, but kids who live their lives from an overflowing relationship with Jesus that leads them to choose what is right.***

If you grew up in church then it has more than likely become evident to you that good church experiences don’t necessarily equate to people who passionately love Jesus. Personally, I grew up in a great church with over 300 teenagers in my youth group. We had great pastors, great facilities, great programs, and great events yet my estimate would be that 60-70% of those same teenagers walked away from their faith or are currently living in a religious, performance-based relationship with God that is void of joy, passion, and mission.

We have to fight the tendency to try to give our

kids all the “good” things we see around us and things we never had as a kid. Rather than parenting through the lens of “what are the parents around me giving their kids,” we must instead parent through the lens of “will this lead my child into a deeper understanding of the gospel?” This may sound easy, but it’s always difficult to turn around and row upstream. There are cultural norms and unspoken assumptions that you will be forced to face and fight against. You might even be misunderstood, but if we want a different result then we must be willing to live a different life.

**LIE #2: Putting my kids first is what they really need.**

For centuries, children were seen as blessings from God who were integral to the overall dynamic and calling of the family. Somewhere over the past several decades we moved our children from being “blessings” to being “idols.” We moved into a kid-centric culture that places the happiness of the child above anything and everything else.

***You might believe that by putting your kids first in your life you are giving them a secure identity as someone who is deeply loved; when in fact, you are creating a deep-seated insecurity that life revolves around them and their happiness.***

God did not design you to worship your kids. When you treat them as an idol, your life will ebb and flow based upon their performance.

To give our children a proper foundation we must:

1. Put our own relationship with God first and foremost.
2. Put our marriage second. Parents who put their marriage before their kids actually give their children a greater sense of identity.
3. Establish healthy boundaries that keep our kids from becoming an idol in our lives. We must remember they are God's children and we are blessed to be able to steward what is His.

**LIE #3: Spiritual discipleship should be outsourced to someone more qualified.**

I understand why some people think this way, but I still disagree with it. When we feel unqualified in our own relationship with Christ we want to bring other entities into the lives of our children so they will turn out "good." We think that just the right church, school, or program will be able to properly disciple our children. Herein lies the sobering reality of parenting: ***You will always be the chief discipler of your children, whether you***

**choose that role or not.** Regardless of if you are intentionally discipling them or trying to outsource it to someone else, YOU will always have the greatest influence on them.

Here is the good news; you don't have to be perfect or anywhere near it to be the leading influence in the life of your child. An environment full of grace, honesty, and brokenness is better than an environment where everything seems to be right but obviously is not.

Surround your kids with the right people, the right environments, and the right opportunities but don't outsource their discipleship. Understand the impact of your influence and don't feel the need to be perfect.

**LIE #4: My personal walk with Christ has little to do with my child's walk with Christ.**

You can't maintain a casual walk with Jesus and expect your children to have a deep passion for Him. ***It must start in you before it starts in them.*** Maybe by God's sovereignty your kids will encounter Christ in a real way and live a life of passion for Him; but statistically speaking, your children are exponentially more likely to live a passionate life in Christ if they've seen it evident in your life. You simply cannot take your kids to

places spiritually that you are not going yourself.

Spiritual confusion, bitterness, and cynicism develop in the hearts of our children when they see obvious inconsistencies between what we say and how we live. When we claim to value something with our lips but there is little evidence in our lives it can be detrimental to our kids' faith. For example, you might say that attending church and serving others are values in your life; but when conflicting opportunities are presented, attending church and serving others get set aside for whatever is immediate. Maybe you claim to value growing in your relationship with Christ but your children never see you reading scripture, never see or hear you pray, or never see you making spiritual growth a priority. Obviously no one is fully aligned between intentions and behavior, but the wider that gap becomes the more difficulties your children will face in developing their faith.

**LIE #5: I should do whatever I can to protect my kids as long as I possibly can.**

Please don't misunderstand; there is a time and place to protect the hearts of our children. This is essential to good parenting and a matter of using wisdom. There is also the opposite extreme where we never want our children to face any real difficulties, never be truly challenged, or

never stumble on their journey. As a result, we run alongside them trying to save them from every pitfall and trying to catch them, lest they fall and skin up their knee along the way. Honestly, this is already one of my greatest challenges as a father.

If our faith is never truly challenged can it ever really be made genuine? If our children spend their lives stuck on the spiritual sideline, never able to get in the game, never seeing their faith challenged, their faith will never become genuine. We must show our kids what it's like to live by faith; to live on mission by using our gifts, talents, and abilities to reach people and grow the Kingdom of God. ***If you want to capture the heart of your child then show them their faith is a life of adventure and not simply a set of beliefs to learn or rules to follow.***

## CHAPTER 2

# THREE TRANSFORMATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS OUR KIDS MUST EXPERIENCE

As parents, we cannot transform the hearts of our children. That is a humbling thought. We can, however, influence them. We can lead them. We can be intentional about discipling them, but we cannot transform them. Transformation only takes place when the gospel takes root in their heart and the Holy Spirit begins to change the way they think and live. We must pray for our children and create environments that will lead to transformation.

Each of the following transformational environments deal primarily with the heart, not simply the head. Biblical knowledge is absolutely essential to our spiritual maturity but if we separate knowledge about Him from real life faith then we inevitably produce children who are living by the letter of the law, not the spirit of the law. According to the teachings of Jesus and Paul's explanation in Romans 5-6, although the law had its place, it was altogether insufficient to lead us to a life of freedom and victory in Christ. When Jesus inaugurates His new Kingdom in Matthew 5-7, He is specifically taking the Jewish law and making external acts of obedience a matter of inward transformation. "Don't do this" or "don't do that" is insufficient to lead us into a life of freedom. It's the same for our children.

None of these three transformational environments can be faked. Sure, we may be able to fake it for a certain period of time, but eventually what is authentic and what is fake will be revealed. Perfection isn't required, but authenticity is.

### **Transformational Environment #1: ABUNDANT GRACE**

The story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15 is an incredible example of abundant grace. It's a radical



picture of the Father's never-ending love for His children. Here is the lost son in the middle of nowhere with nothing to his name. He's so incredibly hungry that he begins to long for the food the pigs were eating. What does he think about in that moment? He remembers the goodness of his father and his childhood. He begins making his way home but the gravity of his sin causes him to doubt whether or not his father would ever welcome him home again. Not only did he leave, but he also squandered the family estate and made a mess along the way. The father leaves no doubt on where he stands when he comes running down the street for his son. No explanation needed. Grace abundantly given. An environment of abundant grace says you will always be loved and you can always come home!

***As parents, we must create an environment where "it's okay to not be okay." We must give our kids a place where they can be open with their struggles, their brokenness, and their sinful nature while knowing they are unconditionally loved.*** A safe place where we are not afraid to say "I'm sorry" or "please forgive me" and where mercy, love, and forgiveness are freely given and freely received. Think with me about the difference between a performance-driven environment and a grace-filled environment regarding your family. A performance-driven environment tells us that our worth is based on what we do or what we

don't do. It keeps us in a constant state of trying to achieve or perform our way into the love of our parents. In contrast, a grace-filled environment says you are loved for who you are, not what you do. Although it may be difficult and messy at times, love is unconditional. ***Unconditional love and abundant grace create a transformational environment where our kids can better realize the love of their Heavenly Father.*** It creates a strong foundation and identity that can stand the tests of life that will come their way.

This is why it's so important to address the gospel in our kids' lives instead of simply addressing their sin. What basis does anyone have for not sinning if they aren't aware of their sin and brokenness and their need for a Savior? The extravagant love of Christ is what leads us to repentance. Without this understanding, we are simply promoting behavior modification or sin management instead of gospel transformation. The amazing grace of God, which has been poured upon us through the work of Jesus, changes everything: our relationships, our responses, and our lives. It leads us to forgiveness instead of retribution. It calls us to turn the other cheek instead of responding in anger. It finds redemption and second chances instead of condemnation and guilt.

I've always struggled to fully understand grace because I'm such a performance and achievement

based person. I heard a story years ago that continually helps me understand the love of the Father that is not based on my works.

*A father takes his son camping and that evening while they are sitting around the campfire the father says, "Son, there is one thing I want from you as you get older. I want you to be the very best at everything you do. I want you to be the best student, the best athlete, get a great job, and be successful at your occupation." What would be the natural response of the son? More than likely, he would spend the rest of his life trying to earn the love of his father, yet never feel as though he is living up to his expectations. The end result is a dead end of frustration and burnout. But what if the father said, "Son, there is one thing I want from you as you get older. I simply want to know you. No matter what happens or where you go or what you do, first and foremost, I want a relationship with you." Now his son doesn't have to spend a lifetime chasing the love of his father. He doesn't have to earn it. He can live his life from a deep security that the love of his father is not based upon his performance.*

Parents, let's create an environment of abundant grace in our homes that values the heart over the

rules and relationship over performance. Grace does not discount, diminish, or blur the lines of truth, it only bolsters it!

## **Transformational Environment #2: AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS**

If you want your children to develop a genuine relationship with Christ then it's imperative they experience authenticity in their relationship with you and with others. They need deep relationships with individuals who are consistent in both word and deed. Individuals who aren't just going through the motions but have a genuine desire to know Christ more. These are authentic relationships where your children can visibly see faith and action meeting together in the life of a person.

I've heard hundreds of life stories as a pastor over the last decade. One obvious consistency in every story is the influence certain people had on their lives, both positive and negative. In fact, I'm not sure that in my thirteen years of full-time ministry I've ever heard someone mention a sermon or the quality of a church service being the most critical piece to their spiritual journey. It's almost always a relationship; a person or group of people who had the greatest impact on their lives. It's inevitable that the people we surround ourselves

and our kids with will shape and impact our lives in profound ways.

***FIRST - You must have an authentic relationship with your children.***

Authenticity in this context simply means that you're not faking it and that you're willing to close the gap between who you are and who you profess to be. While you don't have to be perfect, your children will have great difficulties overcoming the major inconsistencies in your life. On the other hand, if you're willing to be honest about your struggles and attempt to move forward in faith and freedom then your children are more likely to learn that struggles are a natural part of life.

Please don't assume that your past life or your current inadequacies disqualify you from discipling your children. None of us are perfect and each of us wish we could go back and do things differently. But eventually, as your child matures, they will pull back the curtain of your life and see you for who you really are. Will they find your heart and actions are aligned or will they find a faith that hardly impacts your everyday actions? Will they see that all the small groups, Bible studies, outreaches, and church services were only a facade, or will they see someone who is passionate about walking in grace and truth?

If you want your kids to have an authentic faith they will never walk away from, it has to start in you first. When you have a heart for God yourself, you then have the opportunity to lead your children into authentic faith through your authentic relationship with them. You must lead by example because faith is more caught than taught.

***SECOND - You must put your children in the right environments to develop authentic relationships with others.***

We don't get to choose our children's friends but we can put them in the right places to meet the right people. It might sound oversimplified but I've realized this to continually be true: You will never find the right people in the wrong places because the right people aren't there. Not only were my parents great examples in my life, but they always seemed to put me in the right environments to meet the right people. These environments led me to develop some of my greatest friendships, while also finding mentors along the way that greatly influenced and shaped my life. Look at how this was true in the life of one of our City Kids leaders:

*"I grew up being a part of a small group from 6th grade through my senior year of high school. We would meet weekly to discuss a book or read Scripture and talk about how things were going in our lives. We would*

*hang out throughout the week as well. My life was permanently impacted by my small group leaders and the girls that I surrounded myself with. As a 6th grader, my small group was a source of friendship, acceptance, and introductory growth in my walk with Jesus. As I matured, my small group remained a source of friendship and acceptance, but it was also a source of deep-rooted growth in my relationship with Jesus. Still to this day I keep in touch with my past small group leaders, and I still look to them as mentors in my life. Without a doubt, being a part of a small group shaped so many of the decisions that I made and continue to make. Now, as an adult, I'm honored to be a small group leader myself and have the opportunity to invest my life into others just like my leaders invested in me."*

*- Rachel*

### **Transformational Environment #3: ACTIVE FAITH**

Our children need to experience a faith that is living, breathing, and active. A faith that is challenged, tested, and alive. Many parents hover over their children all their lives eliminating every obstacle. The child may be at church every Sunday, attend the best Christian school, quote

Bible verses, and learn to obey the rules, but their faith never becomes active. It's like they've been in training their entire lives, but training for what? They can recite to you the story of Abraham as the father of our faith but they've never been given the opportunity to practice and live out their own faith.

Our children secretly crave for their faith to be one of mission, purpose, and adventure. If we do not give them a story of adventure then they will simply choose a more compelling story when the time eventually comes. ***A faith that isn't active is a faith that isn't genuine; and consequently becomes a faith that is easy to walk away from.***

The older our children are, the more imperative it is to get them off the sideline and into the game. We must create an environment that engages their faith into the greatest adventure the world has to offer - the mission of God. Again, you cannot simply reproduce this in the lives of your children if you haven't first chosen to live this life yourself. When you are active in serving your church, engaged in your community, and committed to using your gifts to grow God's Kingdom, you are partnered in the mission of God and you are creating an understanding in your home that says, "This isn't about us. We exist to give our lives away." The result will be a life overflowing with generosity, sacrifice, love, service, and joy.



## CHAPTER 3

# BEATING THE ODDS

The odds of our kids walking away from their faith are astonishingly high but by partnering together to implement a truly intentional family discipleship model we can beat the odds! As a church, we are fully invested in doing everything we can to lead your kids to have a heart for God and develop an authentic faith they will never walk away from. We are very intentional about how we are discipling your kids and we are also very intentional about how we are partnering with you to do the same. As we partner together 50/50, we believe we can beat the odds that over 50% of our kids will walk away from their faith.

**Here is our commitment to you and what we are asking you to commit to in return.**

## **CHURCH COMMITMENT**

- A safe, fun, and excellent Sunday morning environment.
- A consistent small group leader for every kid (K-12th) in the same service every week.
- Resources to equip parents.
- Opportunities to grow and live on mission as a family.

## **PARENT COMMITMENT**

- Lead by example.
- Be intentional about discipling your children.
- Establish and maintain the three transformational environments in your family.
- Help your children stay connected to their small group leader by attending church consistently.

**As a part of our partnership with you, we would like to provide you with some practical ideas to help you establish and maintain the three transformational environments in your family.**

## **1. ABUNDANT GRACE**

If you aren't creating an environment of abundant grace in your family, what environment are you creating? Without even knowing it, we often create an environment where performance is expected and grace is only given when perfection is achieved. Unfortunately, that's the default mode for many of us but with some intentionality we can create an environment of abundant grace in our families that reflects the character of God to our kids. We reinforce the truth of the gospel when we create a place of unconditional love where rules are followed as a response to love and grace and not in an effort to earn it.

Creating an environment of abundant grace will come more naturally for some parents than it will for others. We all have different personalities, different levels of patience, and different expectations for our kids. Some are wired to expect nothing less than perfection and others are more laid back and easy going. No matter your predisposition, we all need to work to create an environment of abundant grace for our kids.

**Practical ideas to help you establish and maintain an environment of abundant grace in your family:**

- Give your kids a front row seat to the grace of God working in your own life by modeling and verbalizing your own need for God's grace.
- Apologize often and forgive quickly.
- View mistakes as teaching and discipleship opportunities.
- Disciple with love rather than anger and know that how you react to mistakes in the moment matters.
- Let your children know that you value honesty over perfection. Be careful not to condemn or shame them when they're open with you.
- Make sure your kids know the "why" behind the boundaries, guardrails, and rules you establish.
- Continually reinforce the unconditional love and grace you have for your kids. "There is nothing you can do to make me love you less/more..."
- Pray for your kids, pray with your kids, and teach your kids to pray.

## 2. AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Good news: Within the context of authentic relationships, kids tend to adopt the beliefs and values of their parents.

Bad news: Authentic relationships don't happen without intentionality.

So much of parenting involves simply providing for the physical needs and wants of our children and as a result it's easy to neglect their relational needs. Diapers, outfits, toys, meals, messes, homework, practices, games, recitals, etc. are all natural parts of parenting, but if we aren't careful we'll slip into a rushed and disconnected lifestyle that lacks authentic relationships. As our kids get older and inevitable conflict arises, we have to be cautious to not damage our relationship with them and sever our opportunity to lead them spiritually.

Again, just like abundant grace, creating an environment of authentic relationships will come more naturally for some parents than it will for others. Some of us are naturally more relational than others but we all need to work to create an environment of authentic relationships for our kids.

**Practical ideas to help you establish and maintain an environment of authentic relationships in your family: (with you and with others)**

WITH YOU

- Value your relationship with your kids over the rules. Rules are necessary but a relationship has the greatest influence.
- View yourself more like a coach than a drill sergeant and remember you are just a steward of what God has given you.
- Remember that the way God sees us and treats us is a great model for parenting. He wants a relationship with us and loves us unconditionally.
- Know that who you are and what you do speaks louder than what you say because faith and values are more caught than taught.
- Be intentional about scheduling family dinners, game nights, getaways, vacations, and memorable times together.
- Be disciplined about disconnecting from technology and social media so you can be fully present with your family.

- Work to be present: Be present physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Fight the tendency to be constantly distracted so you can truly connect with your kids and deepen your relationship over time.

## WITH OTHERS

- Practice healthy biblical community in your own life as a pattern for your kids to follow.
- Invite people into your home, around your dining table, and into your life on a regular basis.
- Be intentional about placing the right people in your kids' lives.
- Realize that as kids get older it's natural for them to begin looking to people other than their parents for advice and affirmation. This is natural and necessary.
- Surround your children with people (family, friends, mentors, etc.) who love them and share your same values.
- Know that as your kids get older, they need a healthy place where they can wrestle with their struggles, fears, and doubts about life and faith.

- Attend the same service every week so your children can stay connected to their small group leader and friends in their small group.

### **3. ACTIVE FAITH**

If we want our kids to have an authentic faith they will never walk away from we have to get them off the sideline and engage their faith in the mission of God. A faith that isn't active is a faith that is easy to walk away from.

Again, as with abundant grace and authentic relationships, creating an environment of active faith will come more naturally for some parents than it will for others. Some of us are naturally more wired for mission and adventure but we all need to work to create an environment of active faith for our kids.

#### **Practical ideas to help you establish and maintain an environment of active faith in your family:**

- Get your children connected as student leaders who serve regularly on Sundays and/or Wednesdays.
- Fight the tendency to be overprotective and to shelter your kids from every problem or issue



that may arise. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom in this matter.

- Help your kids discover and live out their God-given passions.
- Help your kids find an outlet for active faith that includes adventure and struggle.
- Teach your kids to not only pray but also to act when they see a need. When you respond to needs let your kids be a part of it.
- Provide opportunities to share with neighbors and others. Deliver a meal, pick up trash, mow a yard, host a BBQ, etc. Make sure you talk about why you're doing these things.
- Live out your faith together by serving as a family at church, participating together during Love Tulsa events, going on mission trips together, etc.
- Revolve your family around the mission of God rather than just making it an addition to your lives.

## **A HEART FOR GOD**

In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Moses calls all of Israel to know the one true God, love Him fully, and raise

up future generations to do the same. We live in a different context and culture but our mission is still the same. Ultimately, it's all about having a heart for God! The number one thing we can do to lead our kids into an authentic faith they will never walk away from is to help them develop a heart for God. It may be difficult to imagine now, but someday they will leave home and move into adulthood and it will be their decision if they maintain their faith or not. The foundation that we help them build and the heart for God that we help them develop will be crucial as they navigate their faith in a culture that continues to distance itself further and further away from God. We don't get to make the decision for them but we can be intentional about leading them into it.

### **IT STARTS WITH YOU**

If you want Jesus to be the center of your kids lives, make Him the center of your home. Making Him the center of your home starts by making Him the center of your own life. Your desire to lead your children spiritually should flow out of who you are in Christ and it shouldn't feel forced. That doesn't mean it will be effortless, but if you are taking the time to fill yourself you will naturally overflow into your children. If you find yourself exhausted by the idea of leading your children spiritually, you may not be getting proper renewal yourself.

## **YOU'RE NOT ALONE**

We are in this with you 50/50, and together we can beat the odds! As you navigate the ups and downs throughout the years, we'll be here along the way to equip you with resources, connect you with other parents in the same phase as you, and help you stay connected to an intentional family discipleship model in order to lead your kids into an authentic faith they will never walk away from.

CITY CHURCH TULSA

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES  
[citychurchtulsa.com/familyministry](http://citychurchtulsa.com/familyministry)

