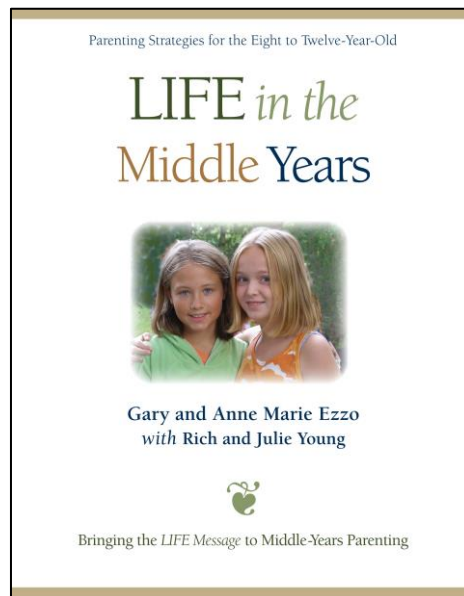


Leader's Guide
For
LIFE in the Middle Years



GrowingFamilies.*Life*

The worldwide mission of Growing Families, through its staff and ministry partners, is to provide families with parenting and family resources that will help instil, encourage, and perpetuate the passing on of biblical values from one generation to the next.

Table of Contents

	Page No
Life in the Middle Years	4
Visit 1 – Middle-Years Parenting in the Digital Age	5
Visit 2 – The Neuroscience of Parental Affection	10
Visit 3 – Your Child’s Changing World	15
Visit 4 – Correction and Encouragement Strategies	20
Visit 5 – Challenges, Changes and Solutions	25
Appendix - Homework Sheets	30

Course Version Numbers

Course Title	Version / Date
LIFE in the Middle Years	2017

Points of Contact



www.growingfamilies.life
www.growingfamiliesleaders.life



GrowingFamiliesLife



growingfamilieslife



GFILife



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ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No portion of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means – electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise – without prior written permission.

WELCOME!

This Leader's Guide has been put together with the aim of encouraging you as class leaders. So, congratulations on your commitment and faith to share in the journey of parenting with others. We believe that as leaders of Growing Families courses you have both an awesome opportunity and big responsibility to speak into the lives of the parents who join you in your classes.

Time and effort will be required to establish and maintain relationships, to encourage and reassure parents, and to humbly share your journey – both your successes and mistakes. So, we hope that this manual will help you share your insights, as well as extract the most out of the course material. We hope that you will bless each family you share your journey with.

Please use this resource in conjunction with the Leader's Guide introduction found at www.growingfamiliesleaders.life

Finally, we would like to share some scripture when God spoke to Moses as an encouragement. *"Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."* Exodus 4:11 (NIV)

May the Lord bless you in your ministry.

Geoff & Alicia Bongers.

A note from Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo

We are continually grateful for the partnership and ongoing effort put forth from our international leadership and especially Geoff and Alicia Bongers in preparing a Leaders Guide to compliment Life in the Middle Years.

As with previous Leader's Guides, this resource contains guidance in laying down a solid foundation based on God's truth and also provides practical suggestions as to how to apply the information contained in each visit during this critical transition of childhood to adolescence. *"When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways"* 1 Corinthians 13:11

We are also grateful for each faithful leader who continues to be obedient to the call given by Jesus to all those who follow Him; "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." and thereby helping others who are coming behind to understand that it is the 'wise man who builds his house on the rock', the solid foundation of God's Word. Matthew 7:24

May we all remember Who we serve and may His name be glorified through the efforts of all involved with this process.

Blessings

Gary & Anne Marie Ezzo

LIFE in the Middle Years

Parenting Strategies for the Eight to Twelve-Year-Old

The middle-years (defined as the period of growth and development extending from ages 8 to 12) is one of the most amazing phases of childhood and unsuspecting time for parents. It is a season in which that son or daughter in your home is too old to be called a child, but too young to be labelled an adolescent. From a growth and developmental standpoint, the middle years is a period in which children begin the long process of metamorphosis—moving away from childhood dependencies, associations, and interests, and moving toward a self-reliance directed more and more by the beliefs and values of their home life.

One of the subtle challenges of middle-years parenting (comparatively speaking) is the deceptive appearance of calm. For most parents, having just come out of the busy training years associated with early childhood, and having not yet stepped into the fast-paced adolescence phase, the middle years almost seem like a rest stop. However, such appearances are deceiving.

We equate the middle childhood years with the flow of a deep water stream. The surface will often look calm, but lying just below the calm is unharnessed energy waiting to be released. It is the smooth and calm of the water's surface that can cause parents to accept the middle-years as a seemingly uneventful period of time in the journey of childhood—a time when Mum and Dad can relax and put things on cruise control. However, that would be a mistake! It is the energy of the unseen, lying just below the surface, which parents must be mindful of. Life in the Middle Years brings the needed knowledge and understanding that can help any parent make wise training decisions.

First Night Leader Alerts

- Review the First Class section in the Leader's Guide Introduction available at www.gfileadersplace.com.
- Print out the Healthy Family Profile for each child (2 copies) available at www.gfileadersplace.com.
- Please adapt this information to suit your leadership style, class format and style.

Follow-up & Next Course Contacts

- Following up parents helps to stay connected. This is a ministry of relationship building.
- Encourage parents to connect to your local, regional and national Growing Families communities via www.growingfamilies.life or social media.
- Remind them to call you if they are struggling or call a Contact Mum.
- Parenting from the Tree of Life or Growing Kids God's Way for ages 3 years to pre-teens expands on some of the principles taught here. You may like to encourage parents to either complete (if they have not completed) or do a refresher course.

Visit One

Middle-Years Parenting in the Digital Age

Duration: 48 minutes

General Summary

Middle-years parenting – the ages from 8 to 12 represents the transition from a child in your home to them being nearly an adolescent. This transition involves the awaking within the child a sense of adventure in an ever-expanding world – which comes more and more outside the security and confines of Mum and Dad. It may be a deceptively calm period – however the middle-years are by no-means a rest stop between early childhood and adolescence.

The middle-years is a complex stage, with a variety of growth transitions – and some will seem more significant than others. But together they are all important as parent’s guide their middle-years child to a healthy adolescence.

Key Principles

- Health adolescence is not the product of chance, but something we can give our children – and it all starts with understanding the transitions that are about to take place.
- Parents must transition from authority to influence with their children, one often overlooked.
- With the increase in self-rule coupled with understanding there is a direct decrease in the amount of parental policing required.
- The Appeal Process.
- The middle-years transitions are not all about our children changing, this is a period of change that parents must recognise that it is a growth transition for children AND parents.

Suggested Class Outline

	Flipped	Traditional	
Open in Prayer and introduction	✓	✓	Start by introducing yourself as leaders; refer to First Class section in the Leaders Introduction found at www.growingfamiliesleaders.life .
Sharing Time	✓	✓	Ask each couple to introduce themselves and what their expectations are of this course.
Video		✓	Duration: 48 mins – Visit Summary page 13
Refreshments		✓	Being the first class this may not last long if your group doesn’t really know each other, but this time can merge into your discussion time.
Discussion	✓	✓	Start your discussion using the possible discussion topics in this manual. Allow parents to ask their own questions.
Close in Prayer	✓	✓	Encourage parents to implement the principles and complete any activities ready for the next class.



Please Note

When using the email templates, you may want to set a reminder to do this either straight after the class or the next day, so the class participants know when to expect them.

Visit One

Summary Points

- 1. The period of growth and development extending from 8 to 12 is one of the most amazing phases of childhood and unsuspecting transition-time for parents.
- 2. The middle years is a season in which that son and daughter in your home is too old to be called a child, but too young to be labelled an adolescent.
- 3. From a growth and development standpoint, the middle years is a period in which children begin the long process of metamorphosis – moving away from childhood dependencies, associations, and interests, and moving toward a self-reliance directed more and more by the beliefs and values of their home life.
- 4. The middle years consist of a variety of growth transitions that begin around age eight and merge as one major transition by age twelve.
 - a. Transitioning away from Childhood and Childhood association
 - b. Transitioning to “Getting all the Facts Right”
 - c. Transitioning from an Assumed Trust to Reasoned Trust
 - d. Transitioning to the Growing Influence of Peers
 - e. Transitioning to Hormone-Activated Bodies
 - f. Authority to Influence Transition
- 5. The authority to influence transition is the only parent-initiated transition.
- 6. Parental authority is a necessary substitute for three things children lack:
 - a. knowledge,
 - b. understanding; and
 - c. self-regulating caution and initiative.
- 7. Parents use their authority to:
 - a. protect their children’s welfare,
 - b. educate their children in beneficial life skills, and
 - c. instruct in matters relating to values of the heart.
- 8. The younger the child the more you will guide and direct by your authority. As you begin to journey through the middle years, you begin to transition from relying on the power of your authority to bring conformity in behaviour, to tapping into the power of your relational influence.

- 9. To appeal to someone in authority, whether it be a parent, teacher or employer is to acknowledge another person's rule in our lives. To be in a position of authority, and to hear an appeal is to accept that sometimes we give instructions without being fully aware of the context in which our instructions are given.
- 10. Teaching your children how to make an appeal removes the temptation to disobey even simple instructions. The child's job is to bring "New Information" back to you – information that Mom, did not have when she originally gave her instructions.
- 11. Benefits of teaching the appeal process:
 - a. It makes obedience attractive to children, since they know their parents are approachable and willing to revisit a previously-given instruction.
 - b. It protects children from becoming needlessly frustrated.
 - c. It prepares children to interact correctly with present and future authorities.
 - d. It prevents parental authority from being arbitrary, legalistic or authoritarian.
 - e. It allows parents the right to change their minds without the fear of compromising their authority.

Possible Discussion Topics

Relating the following topics to real life situations that may have occurred within your own family will greatly assist your class members in understanding the principles in this visit.

This section may include discussion questions (•) and reminder points (❖).

Use your discretion on how to use these in your class.

- **Did anyone have a key take-away from this visit that they would like to share?**

You may like to first read over the summary points of the visit to help this discussion. As a leader take note of these answers because they are a great conversational starting point for the next visit. For example, a mum may state: “I really appreciated being reminded of the importance of my personal quiet time.” When the class meets again, you might ask her: “How did you do this week with your personal devotions?” The more you are able to reach back to their personal comments, the more conversational the entire class becomes.

- **Have you noticed any indications of your child going through any of the middle years transitions?**

Transitioning away from childhood and childhood association

Transitioning to “getting all the facts right”

Transitioning from an assumed trust to reasoned trust

Transitioning to the growing influence of peers

Transitioning to hormone-activated bodies

Authority to influence transition

Seek to expand on some of these transitions with your own experiences to lead discussion.

- **How may the Appeal Process make a difference in your family?**

Seek to discuss with the class examples of how the appeal process might be helpful – even within the context of adult relationships.

Discuss under what circumstances in which the appeal process may be withdrawn – especially with the younger age bracket. The key to the appeal process is the bringing of new information and not arguing.

- ❖ **You may need to review how to introduce the Appeal Process – covered on page 28 of the workbook and hand out a poster listed in the Supplementary Resources.**



Leader note

To be consistent with the language used throughout this course, please use the terminology Pre-teen as 10-12 years and Middle-Years as 8-12 years.



Please Note

There is no homework in the student manual – a student homework sheet has been developed and included in the Appendix for use at your discretion. They are also available as a download at www.gfileadersplace.com.

Encouraging discussion via homework is an effective way for class members to see how others are applying the principles

Homework Assignment

Highlight the key activities listed below to encourage class members to apply the principles covered.

Remind the class members to be prepared to share their insights and experiences as appropriate.

1. **Read Chapter 1 “The Middle-Years Transition,” Chapter 2 “The Appeal Process” and Appendix A “Traits of a Healthy Family.”**
2. **Complete the Healthy Family Profile that is found in Appendix A for each middle-years child.**
Complete the profile separately as parents and then compare and discuss the results. You may also wish to get your pre-teen to complete the profile. Make a list of 3-5 things that you need to work on, talk about them together and then discuss HOW you will work on these and then START working on them.
3. **Introduce the Appeal Process using the guidelines in Chapter 2.**
4. **Review how you are navigating your child through these middle-years transitions?**
Transitioning away from childhood and childhood association
Transitioning to “getting all the facts right”
Transitioning from an assumed trust to reasoned trust
Transitioning to the growing influence of peers
Transitioning to hormone-activated bodies
Authority to influence transition

Supplemental Resources

Online	growingfamilies.life	gfileadersplace.com
Appeal Process poster	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Healthy Families Profile handout	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Homework Sheet		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Class Email Template		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Visit Two

The Neuroscience of Parental Affection

Duration: 39 minutes

General Summary

The major theme of this visit is the sustaining influence our words can have on people especially on children. The words and expressions we gained from our own parents, and the diet of words your children will hear from you, will significantly contribute to the shaping of their thought-life and can produce memories that hide in the shadows of their mind for their lifetime.

With a middle-years child, this is the last opportunity for a meaningful “course correction,” before they enter the teen years. The good news is that the brain is incredibly resilient. Just as death words destroy, life-giving words bring healing and growth. Children only get one childhood and we have the opportunity to fill it with life!

Key Principles

- The diet of words that children hear shapes their thought life.
- A life-giving home environment is a lifestyle, cultivated by parents, that promotes the life-giving character of God.
- Life words are how to bring the presence of God to the moment.
- The power of life words is that they carry a life energy that the human mind connects with and thrives on.
- Vice words are the opposite of virtue; they shackle children to the culture of death.
- Parents must emphasise the virtue that is lacking, not the vice that is present.
- Death words have a ‘shelf life’ within the brain – the older the child, the longer the lifespan.
- Words are powerful.

Suggested Class Outline

	Flipped	Traditional	
Open in Prayer	✓	✓	
Review	✓	✓	Ask if there are any questions, insights or thoughts from the previous visit and go through the questions for review.
Video		✓	Duration: 39 mins – Visit Summary page 31
Refreshments		✓	This may merge into your discussion time.
Discussion	✓	✓	Start your discussion using the possible discussion topics in this manual. Allow parents to ask their own questions.
Close in Prayer	✓	✓	Encourage parents to implement the principles and complete any activities ready for the next class.

Visit Two

Summary Points

- 1. You know that old saying: “You are what you eat!” Well, equally true is this fact: “You are what you think.” What we put into our mind affects the chemistry of our brain and as parents, what you put into your children’s minds affects the chemistry and construction of their brain, which in turn impacts their thought-life and emotions.
- 2. The words and expressions you gained from your parents, and the diet of words your children hear from you, will significantly contribute to the shaping of their thought-life and can produce memories that hide in the shadows of their mind.
- 3. In the field of neuro-science, it has been long suspected and now confirmed that the moral quality of your words will profoundly and deeply impact the higher learning centers of a child’s brain. This in turn, influences the child’s relational perceptions – not just how they see other people (siblings, parents, friends) but how they view themselves.
- 4. A Life Giving Home Environment is a lifestyle, cultivated by parents that promote the life-giving character of God, while actively avoiding language, attitudes and behaviours that assault or detract from God’s character.
- 5. True Christ followers have a dual residency – a temporary, earthly one, and an eternal residence in the City of God. Having a dual residency also means that our life is continually being challenged by the influences of two opposite and competing cultures – the culture of life and the culture of death.
- 6. Virtue and vice are contrasting life and death concepts. Virtuous words have value, communicate worth and potential, and promote beauty and life, because they are connected back to life. Vice words promote failure, corruption and defeat, because they are connected back to death.
- 7. Vice is the opposite of virtue and so are vice words. They are common words that flow out of the culture of death and sow discouragement, failure, corruption and death. They are accusatory words and speak of a person as they are, not as they can be. So instead of pointing children in the direction of life, death words shackle children to the culture of death.
- 8. When parents draw their vocabulary from the culture of death, they are reinforcing in the mind of the child, the validity of the death symbols. Death messages are validated in the mind of the child, and from one child the message is passed to a sibling.
- 9. The human brain! It is not only the most complex organ in the human body, but it is also the most complex structure of creation. The brain consists of a network of 100 billion uniquely-suited nerve cells called neurons.

- 10. The growth of each neuron is tied to the repetition of experience and this can play to our advantage or disadvantage, depending on the type of the stimuli received through the five senses: touch, smell, taste, hearing and sight.
- 11. Incoming sensory data travels across a network of neurons to the Cerebral Cortex where it is translated into meaningful information. However, on its way to the cortex, the data passes through the Thalamus region of the brain where the sensory message is cloned into a second message.
- 12. The Amygdala detects and responds to threats by separating threats into specific categories and subcategories, including physical threats.
- 13. The Amygdala also scans sensory messages for anything that can hurt us emotionally and will respond to emotional threats as if it were a physical threat.
- 14. The Amygdala can also search the memory for similar pain triggers associated with humiliation, rejection, feelings of inadequacy, feelings of shame, not being accepted, not able to achieve, or not fitting in intellectually or socially.
- 15. The chemicals that are used to protect us from physical harm, as in the case of the snake in the pathway, can become toxic when the Amygdala calls for protecting us from reliving a hurtful memory.
- 16. Embedded within the nature of death are Death Words. They injure children, even if no intent to cause injury is present. Words that belittle, berate, shame, insult, humiliate, threaten or attack the dignity of a child become the property of the child's memory.
- 17. Emotional memories have a shelf life. Replaying the bad memory keeps the toxic thoughts alive and the brain chemistry has to continually respond to it.
- 18. Life words that flow out of a Life-Giving Home environment not only calm the mind, they create protective barriers and bring a type of organised harmony to the emotions and intellect, while reducing the toxic influence of stress-filled memories.

Possible Discussion Topics

Relating the following topics to real life situations that may have occurred within your own family will greatly assist your class members in understanding the principles in this visit.

This section may include discussion questions (•) and reminder points (❖).

Use your discretion on how to use these in your class.

- **Did anyone have a key take-away from this visit that they would like to share?**
You may like to first read over the summary points of the visit to help this discussion. As a leader, note take-aways as they are a great conversational starting point for the next visit.

- **How does speaking life words positively impact your middle-years child?**
Virtue words prompt and encourage the child with life affirming words. Virtuous words have value, communicate worth and potential and promote beauty and life. Vice words promote failure, corruption and defeat, because they are connected back to death.

The Amygdala detects and responds to threats – including emotional ones from vice words and may be caused to ‘stay alive’ within the child, attacking the dignity of the child becoming part of their memory.

- **Are you characterised by speaking words of Life or Death?**
Mum and Dad, your words count! We are called to elevate truth and virtue not deception and vice. While a course correction will take time and perseverance – be encouraged, with the Holy Spirit’s help the investment will be worth it.
- **On reflection, given this visit what are some words of life that you could have used this past week**
Keep this section up beat and positive – needs to be a time for positive reflection – not a self-criticism session.
- **What is the difference between vice and virtue words and positive and negative words? What is yes and no in these definitions?**
Talk through with examples how yes or no can be both positive and negative. Discuss how vice and virtue are life vs death words.
- ❖ **With a middle-years child, this is the last opportunity for a meaningful “course correction,” before they enter the teen years. Children only get one childhood and we have the opportunity to fill it with life!**
- ❖ **These life and death words begin with Mum and Dad, how they speak to each other – more is caught than taught.**

Homework Assignment

Highlight the key activities listed below to encourage class members to apply the principles covered. Remind the class members to be prepared to share their insights and experiences as appropriate.

1. **Read Chapter 3 “Discovering the ‘Why’ of Life” and Chapter 4 “Toxic Words – Toxic Thoughts.”**
2. **Take inventory of the words your family hears – spoken within the family, neighbours, TV, games, screen time, etc. Assess the balance of Life and Death words.**
3. **Consider what direction you are heading in terms of creating a “life giving” environment in your home. Consider what you may need to change. Don’t forget to encourage each other, and your children, when you notice “life giving” words.**

Supplemental Resources

Online	growingfamilies.life	gfileadersplace.com
Virtue - Vice poster	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
THINK poster	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Two-World Perspective Poem	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Homework Sheet		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Class Email Template		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Visit Three

Your Child's Changing World

Duration: 33 minutes

General Summary

This session will centre on the three primary influences that shape your preteen's world. Firstly, that influence is the power of peer pressure and "groupthink." Your middle-years child will learn what it means and what is required to belong to a group of peers and what it means to stand-alone. Secondly, there are biological influences, which begin with puberty and end with maturity. Because of the influence of hormones, your child now views himself and others differently, especially the "others" of the opposite gender. The third, communication and how it changes in the middle years – including the role of temperament, birth order and gender.

Key Principles

- You need the power of community, it establishes within the group a sense of we-ness that encourages members to work toward a common good, guided by common values. Shared values between community and home result in positive peer pressure on your child.
- Do not underestimate the power of your family identity. Within the comfortable confines of the interdependent family, parents, not peers, usually have the greater influence. Peer pressure on a child is only as strong as family identity is weak.
- Good memories always support a strong family identity.
- Peer Pressure is a socializing force that continually challenges the status quo of one's thinking and behaviour. Peer pressure is only negative if the peer-culture's values are in opposition to those of the parents.
- Hormonal changes in the endocrine system begin in children at about age eight, not twelve which is commonly believed. While changes may result in new patterns of behaviour, glands don't affect attitudes of the heart.
- Healthy, proactive communication is one of the best forms of pre-teen and adolescent encouragement.
- Good communication can prevent more conflicts than corrections can solve.

Suggested Class Outline

	Flipped	Traditional	
Open in Prayer	✓	✓	
Review	✓	✓	Ask if there are any questions, insights or thoughts from the previous visit and go through the questions for review.
Video		✓	Duration: 33 mins – Visit Summary page 51
Refreshments		✓	This may merge into your discussion time.
Discussion	✓	✓	Start your discussion using the possible discussion topics in this manual. Allow parents to ask their own questions.
Close in Prayer	✓	✓	Encourage parents to implement the principles and complete any activities ready for the next class.

Visit Three

Summary Points

- 1. Awakening within your middle-years child is an attraction to his or her peer culture and one in which your child becomes increasingly more sensitive to what the group thinks and what the group decides is trending.
- 2. Whether this a good or bad thing, it is still a fact that a pre-teen's perceived sense of standing within his or her peer group is often tied to the allegiance shown toward the group's expectations, interests and values.
- 3. Peer pressure on a child is not inherently bad or corrupting. It only has a negative influence when the peer-group's values stand in strong opposition to the values of the child's home life.
- 4. This why it is important that your child has the right friends. Friends from families that share your beliefs and values contribute to positive peer pressure.
- 5. There are two groups that can have a profound impact on our children. The friends and families we hang around with, and the friends and families our children hang around with.
- 6. The greater the disparity between the values of your family and your family community (from which you and your child will both draw your peers), the greater will be the source of conflict within the home. The opposite of this is also true; shared values between community and home result in positive peer pressure on your child.
- 7. Building a healthy family identity is a type of preventative medicine for the family, because it helps promote and maintain healthy family relationships.
- 8. The middle years is the time when children are old enough to begin validating the activities of childhood they find comforting and carry those activities into adolescence as part of their own identity.
- 9. Building a healthy family identity requires:
 - a. Mom and Dad's physical presence.
 - b. Establishing and transmitting your family core values.
 - c. Allow your kids to plan a family night and vacations.
 - d. Establishing and carrying forward family traditions.

- 10. The three characteristics of healthy families:
 - a. They have a strong interdependent bound between family members, cemented together by a shared faith that generates common values.
 - b. Members of a healthy family enjoy each other – not just in the specific role of mom, dad and siblings, but as friends.
 - c. Healthy family relationships are cultivated, not inherited.
- 11. Hormonal changes start as early as age seven, when the gonado-trophin hormone levels begin to rise in both boys and girls. The results are more readily apparent in girls, since they tend to develop secondary sex characteristics as much as two years ahead of boys.
- 12. Proactive conversation is a specific strategy that has a purpose beyond ordinary everyday conversation. It is a type of conversation that is exploratory and affirming and one that indirectly teaches a life-principle, or reinforces one already taught.
- 13. Communication methods tied to gender:
 - a. Preadolescent girls tend to feel more comfortable with direct conversation when receiving correction.
 - b. Preadolescent boys tend to feel less threatened and more comfortable with indirect conversation.
- 14. One influence on communication that is often over-looked is birth order, The firstborn child tend to interpret what Mom and Dad say literally, even when we, as parents clearly meant something figuratively.

Possible Discussion Topics

Relating the following topics to real life situations that may have occurred within your own family will greatly assist your class members in understanding the principles in this visit.

This section may include discussion questions (•) and reminder points (❖).

Use your discretion on how to use these in your class.

- **Did anyone have a key take-away from this visit that they would like to share?**
You may like to first read over the summary points of the visit to help this discussion. As a leader, note take-aways as they are a great conversational starting point for the next visit.
- **What are your children characterised in terms of responding to peer group pressure?**
Peer group pressure is not inherently good or bad – it's only an issue when its in strong opposition to your family core values. Discuss the value of the like minded family and friends.
- **Are they in a “Good Community” that supports their family’s values? Are they getting support from other like-minded parents?**
Discuss the value of liked minded community support and how it helps parents and children. Discuss the reality of the situation when like-mindedness is hard to come by; when there is little or no liked minded community it is important to prioritise positive opportunities when they come about.
- **Ask your class if they have been working on family identity?**
Get them to share ways they have been doing this. Are their middle year children happy to do family activities? If not, then maybe get them involved in the planning process to increase ownership.
- **How are you going in building a healthy family identity?**
Cover the four key elements: mum and dad’s physical presence matters, family core values, kids plan family nights and vacations, and family traditions.
- **Are you noticing any impacts of hormonal changes with your child?**
Hormonal changes begin in children at about age eight, not twelve, with girls typically being affected two years earlier than boys. Fathers touch remains critical during these changing times.
- **Are you aware of the impact of direct and indirect communication between genders?**
Preadolescent girls tend to feel more comfortable with direct conversation when receiving correction. Preadolescent boys tend to feel less threatened and more comfortable with indirect conversation.

Homework Assignment

Highlight the key activities listed below to encourage class members to apply the principles covered. Remind the class members to be prepared to share their insights and experiences as appropriate.

1. **Read Chapter 5 “Peer Identity Versus Family Identity,” Chapter 6 “Influences from Within & Without.”**
2. **Read Appendix B “Seven Warning Flags” and complete the handout test (not in your workbook).**
3. **Establish (or review) family core values. Refer to suggestions on page 57-58 of your workbook.**
4. **Get your kids to plan a family night or outing.**
5. **Discover what your children think your family traditions are or have a discussion about what traditions your family could introduce.**
6. **Implement the ten talk in your family.**

Supplemental Resources

Online

	growingfamilies.life	gfileadersplace.com
Seven Warning Flags test	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ten Talk poster	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Homework Sheet		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Class Email Template		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Visit Four

Correction and Encouragement Strategies

Duration: 34 minutes

General Summary

This visit is a summary of the correction and encouragement covered in PTOL previously, covering a review of the basic laws of correction and other applications that apply to middle-years parenting. It gives an overview of the discipline flow chart (covered in the workbook). Also covered are the seven habits for successful middle years parenting.

Key Principles

- “Nature” has changed your middle years child and now you must adjust your nurturing to match those changes.
- The best form of correction comes from the pro-active, preventative side of training.
- The four laws of correction still apply to middle years
 - Discern motive - childishness vs foolishness
 - The punishment must fit the crime
 - All correction must be restorative
 - Correction must promote learning
- The seven habits for successful middle years parenting
 - Keep the life message in front of them
 - Keep doing couch time
 - Date your children
 - Teach them to become responsible
 - Teach the biblical civility code
 - Leave love notes
 - Teach your children how to look for the “door of escape”

Suggested Class Outline

	Flipped	Traditional	
Open in Prayer	✓	✓	
Review	✓	✓	Ask if there are any questions, insights or thoughts from the previous visit and go through the questions for review.
Video		✓	Duration: 34 mins – Visit Summary page 77
Refreshments		✓	This may merge into your discussion time.
Discussion	✓	✓	Start your discussion using the possible discussion topics in this manual. Allow parents to ask their own questions.
Close in Prayer	✓	✓	Encourage parents to implement the principles and complete any activities ready for the next class.

Visit Four

Summary Points

- 1. Correction for innocent mistakes and not-so-innocent deeds, will be most effective in a home environment where the greater emphasis is placed on preventing unwanted and unruly behaviours, rather than just attempting to correct when those behaviours pop up.
- 2. When you have toddlers, so much of your parenting is physical - chasing after you toddler, picking up, and putting down. In the middle years, parenting is more mental than physical. Mothers and fathers are required to think more and to get their children to think.
- 3. "Time" for a two-year-old really belongs to Mom and Dad, because the two-year-old has a very limited concept of time. With a toddler you could rush in and invade their time and demand their attention. In contrast, "time" for a middle-years child has value, because he or she understands time. It is theirs, they own it and it should be treated with some level of respect.
- 4. The four laws of correction apply to middle-years children just as much as pre-schoolers. Embedded within the precepts is a protection that prevents mothers and fathers from over-correcting or under-correcting their children.
- 5. Childishness refers to the unintentional and non-malicious mistakes made in life. With children, it is often the result of a lack of knowledge or lack of understanding. This is referred to as a "head" issue.
- 6. Foolishness takes place when a child knowingly and intentionally chooses to act in defiance without regard to consequence or injury to self or others. The child knows that he is doing wrong and continues anyway. This is a heart issue.
- 7. If correction is to be meaningful, then it has to be fair, balanced, weighed against the child's wrong.
- 8. To correct a child is to bring the child back from error, or to restore the child. It is returning the child to the pathway of safety, wisdom and prudence.
- 9. Punishment serves a specific purpose within the correction process. It is the means by which parents establish the value of an offence against another person or their property. It teaches a child how a particular action or behaviour is viewed, whether it is a minor infraction or a serious offence.
- 10. An offence against a person or property requires an apology.
- 11. The statement, "I'm sorry" is associated with unintentional mistakes that caused injury to a person or damage to property. This form of apology expresses regret over an action while accepting responsibility for the actions.

- 12. "Will you forgive me?" is associated with wrong actions generated by foolish impulses and malicious intent that caused injury to a person or damage to property.
- 13. All correction must promote learning. Without the "why" of wrong, there is no correction, just a temporary random redirection of behaviour.
- 14. Seven habits of successful middle-years parents:
 - a. Keep the life message in front of them.
 - b. Keep doing couch-time.
 - c. Date your children.
 - d. Make sure middle years kids take ownership of their monkey.
 - e. Teach the mealtime civility code.
 - f. Never leave home without a love note.
 - g. Teach your children to look for the "door of escape."

Possible Discussion Topics

Relating the following topics to real life situations that may have occurred within your own family will greatly assist your class members in understanding the principles in this visit.

This section may include discussion questions (•) and reminder points (❖).

Use your discretion on how to use these in your class.

- **Did anyone have a key take-away from this visit that they would like to share?**
You may like to first read over the summary points of the visit to help this discussion. As a leader, note take-aways as they are a great conversational starting point for the next visit.
- **Discuss how the use of the discipline flow chart is working in each family.**
This is an idea opportunity to reinforce that the best form of correction comes from the proactive, preventative side of training. Depending on familiarity, understanding and usage of the flow chart – an additional night using the PTOL visit 17 on the flow chart may be useful.
- **Discuss each of the seven habits of successful middle years parents.**
For each of the seven habits, ask how they are being implemented, any challenges, issues or successes.
 1. Keep the life message in front of them
 2. Keep doing couch time
 3. Date your children
 4. Teach them to become responsible
 5. Teach the biblical civility code
 6. Leave love notes
 7. Teach your children how to look for the “door of escape”
- ❖ **Passing on responsibilities is a key aspect of parenting in the middle years and often missed or delayed (especially for the first born). If the class would benefit from more teaching on this topic – we highly recommend running PTOL Visit 16 as an additional night. This visit is best done with the parents and middle years children together.**

Homework Assignment

Highlight the key activities listed below to encourage class members to apply the principles covered. Remind the class members to be prepared to share their insights and experiences as appropriate.

1. **Read Chapter 7 “Correction Basics,” and Chapter 8 “Preventative Side of Correction.”**
2. **Review and discuss how you are going with implementing the discipline flow chart. Identify focus areas where you may need additional work.**
3. **Review and discuss how you are implementing the “7 habits” – be prepared to share some examples with the class. Identify focus areas where you may need additional work.**

Supplemental Resources

Online	growingfamilies.life	gfieadersplace.com
Discipline Flow Chart	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
PTOL Visit 16 – How to Raise a Responsible Child	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
PTOL Visit 17 – The Correction Side of Training	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Homework Sheet		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Class Email Template		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Visit Five

Challenges, Changes and Solutions

Duration: 57 minutes

General Summary

This visit covers proactive strategies perfectly suited for the middle years child. The aim of this visit complements the last visit with additional proactive strategies to help prepare the middle-years child for some predictable challenges ahead. A middle-years topic pool covers off an additional range of pertinent topics.

Key Principles

- The best form of correction comes from the pro-active, preventative side of training.
- Contingency planning is important to prepare for a variety of “what if” situations.
- There are certain phrases and responses during training discourage rather than redirect, which should be avoided.
- Bad attitudes are issues of the heart and often accompany a wrong action – and both offences need to be addressed.
- Proactive and reactive plans are required in relation to sexual knowledge and ‘romantic’ notions.
- Challenges for parenting in the digital age are not technology challenges, but rather parenting challenges with a digital look to them.

Suggested Class Outline

	Flipped	Traditional	
Open in Prayer	✓	✓	
Review	✓	✓	Ask if there are any questions, insights or thoughts from the previous visit and go through the questions for review.
Video		✓	Duration: 57 mins – Visit Summary page 101
Refreshments		✓	This may merge into your discussion time.
Discussion	✓	✓	Start your discussion using the possible discussion topics in this manual. Allow parents to ask their own questions.
Close in Prayer	✓	✓	Encourage parents to implement the principles and complete any activities as if they were coming back for another visit. If they have any further questions encourage them to call you or a Contact Mum in the area. Encourage them to refresh themselves or complete Parenting from the Tree of Life or Growing Kids God’s Way.

Visit Five

Summary Points

- 1. In parenting, a moral contingency plan is a response developed in advance of an unexpected challenge that the child has never faced before, but is likely to face as his or her peer and authority world expands.
- 2. When a choice has to be made between right and wrong, or even good, better and best, we can choose to remain comfortable or we can choose to be courageous, but we cannot be both at the same time. Being comfortable so often calls us to take the side of silence. To speak up and take a stand contrary to that of a peer group, takes moral courage.
- 3. Phrases and responses parents should avoid saying or doing during the middle-years.
 - a. Do not harp
 - b. Do not use sarcasm
 - c. Do not rob them of the joy of serving you
 - d. Do not say, when they do something wrong: "The Bible says."
 - e. Do not give your children a "death" identity
- 4. Getting to the heart of the middle-years child requires that parents deal with wrong attitudes with the same sense of urgency that they deal with wrong actions. However, that means treating them as separate and independent wrongs. Both need correction!
- 5. When it comes to communicating "sexual knowledge" is not innocent knowledge, because sexual knowledge cannot be separated from moral knowledge that regulates human emotions and responses.
- 6. When it comes to children, communication of sexual and biological details needs to fit into a relational and moral context, if they are to have any real, and lasting protective meaning to children.
- 7. Middle-years children are too young to date or to flirt with real-life romantic notions that pre-maturely introduce or encourage boy friend, girl friend relationships. Preadolescence is not the time for children or their parents to be engaged in such thinking.
- 8. Social media is an entirely different world with its own unique challenges that young teen is not morally or emotionally mature enough to handle.
- 9. The character strengths and weaknesses of a child will be magnified with the use of a smart phone.

- 10. Your child's digital world requires a manageable level of self-control, civility, manners, moral sensitivity, kindness, life-giving character, and all the self-confidence and close family identity that is required to successfully battle peer pressure.
- 11. Digital threats to consider:
 - a. Threat to family time
 - b. Threat to sleep
 - c. Threat to healthy brain development
 - d. Threat to emotions
 - e. Threat to relationships
 - f. Threat to spiritual well-being.
- 12. When your kids present a request like that may involve risk of some kind, you can find the best answer by employing the following four questions.
 - a. If you say, "Yes," to your child's request, what is the best thing that can happen?
 - b. If you say, "Yes," to your child's request, what is the worst thing that can happen?
 - c. If you say, "No," to your child's request, what is the best thing that can happen?
 - b. If you say, "No," to your child's request, what is the worst thing that can happen?

Possible Discussion Topics

Relating the following topics to real life situations that may have occurred within your own family will greatly assist your class members in understanding the principles in this visit.

This section may include discussion questions (•) and reminder points (❖).

Use your discretion on how to use these in your class.

- **Did anyone have a key take-away from this visit that they would like to share?**
You may like to first read over the summary points of the visit to help this discussion. As a leader, note take-aways as they are a great conversational starting point for any following up.
- **Discuss how we can avoid using these negative forms of speech – sarcasm, robbing children’s joy, the “Bible says” and death identities?**
As sarcasm is a form of death speech – words of life should be used instead. Instead of robbing children of the joy of serving you allow their love in actions flow through without your prompting. Switch the “Bible says” to God says or God says in His Word – to help your children fall in love with the messenger. Death identities should be replaced with your children’s God-name.
- **Ask why it is important to correct both for a wrong action and a wrong attitude separately.**
Highlight that most parents correct for wrong actions, but miss correcting for wrong attitudes. You may wish to refer to Page 112 – 113 to illustrate the need to separate the offences.
- **How are you planning to discuss sexual knowledge with your children?**
When it comes to children, the communication of sexual and biological details need to fit into a relational and moral context if they are to have any real, and lasting protective meaning to children. More information is in the workbook.
- ❖ **If the discussion arises about boy-girl relationships, it is likely that this lead to a complex discussion, probably best done outside of the class given the middle years focus of the class. Additional resources may be recommended – refer to the growingfamiliesleaders.life website for the latest material.**
- **Is anyone having issues with digital devices and internet access?**
Bring the discussion back to the root moral issue that is at the heart of the ‘digital’ or ‘technology’ problem. The digital age has not created a new set of challenges for parents – they just have a digital look to them... self-control, honesty, integrity etc.

Homework Assignment

Highlight the key activities listed below to encourage class members to apply the principles covered. Remind the class members to be prepared to share their insights and experiences as appropriate.

1. **Read Chapter 9 “Training Habits to Embrace and to Avoid,” Chapter 10 “Middle- Years Topic Pool,” Chapter 11 “Cyber Parenting in the Digital Age” and Appendix C “The “Talk””**
2. **Discuss as parents and then with your middle aged children some generic pre-planned responses to a range of potential situations?**
3. **Discuss as parents a plan for “The Talk” using Appendix C. Also consider what additional resources you may need to help you implement your plan.**
4. **Discuss as parents the use of technology and Internet access in your family.**

Supplemental Resources

Online	growingfamilies.life	gfileadersplace.com
Homework Sheet		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Class Email Template		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Title	Author	ISBN
The Princess and the Kiss	Jennie Bishop	0-87162-868-6
The Squire and the Scroll	Jennie Bishop	1-59317-079-3
Life Lessons from The Princess and the Kiss	Jennie Bishop	0-940110-52-0
Life Lessons from The Squire and the Scroll	Jennie Bishop	0-940110-67-9
The Miracle of Change	Ami Loper	978-0-9678798-2-6
The Mission: Boy to Man	Tim & Ami Loper	978-0-9678798-3-3
Cyber Parenting	James & Simone Boswell	978-1-922000-87-3

Appendix
Homework Sheet

Life in the Middle Years – Homework

There is a direct relationship between doing the homework and success in applying the principles. You will need more than just a casual understanding of what you are about to learn. You may be asked to share some of your insights and discussions of the following questions.

Visit 1 - Middle-Years Parenting in the Digital Age

1. Read Chapter 1 “The Middle-Years Transition,” Chapter 2 “The Appeal Process” and Appendix A “Traits of a Healthy Family.”
2. Complete the Healthy Family Profile that is found in Appendix A for each middle-years child.
Complete the profile separately as parents and then compare and discuss the results. You may also wish to get your pre-teen to complete the profile. Make a list of 3-5 things that you need to work on, talk about them together and then discuss HOW you will work on these and then START working on them.
3. Introduce the Appeal Process using the guidelines in Chapter 2.
4. Review how you are navigating your child through these middle-years transitions?
Transitioning away from childhood and childhood association
Transitioning to “getting all the facts right”
Transitioning from an assumed trust to reasoned trust
Transitioning to the growing influence of peers
Transitioning to hormone-activated bodies
Authority to influence transition

Visit 2 – The Neuroscience of Parental Affection

1. Read Chapter 3 “Discovering the ‘Why’ of Life” and Chapter 4 “Toxic Words – Toxic Thoughts.”
2. Take inventory of the words your family hears – spoken within the family, neighbours, TV, games, screen time, etc. Assess the balance of Life and Death words.
3. Consider what direction you are heading in terms of creating a “life giving” environment in your home. Consider what you may need to change. Don’t forget to encourage each other, and your children, when you notice “life giving” words.

Visit 3 – Your Child’s Changing World

1. Read Chapter 5 “Peer Identity Versus Family Identity,” Chapter 6 “Influences from Within & Without.”
2. Read Appendix B “Seven Warning Flags” and complete the handout test (not in your workbook).
3. Establish (or review) family core values. Refer to suggestions on page 57-58 of your workbook.
4. Get your kids to plan a family night or outing.
5. Discover what your children think your family traditions are or have a discussion about what traditions your family could introduce.
6. Implement the ten talk in your family.

Visit 4 – Correction and Encouragement Strategies

1. Read Chapter 7 “Correction Basics,” and Chapter 8 “Preventative Side of Correction.”
2. Review and discuss how you are going with implementing the discipline flow chart. Identify focus areas where you may need additional work.
3. Review and discuss how you are implementing the “7 habits” – be prepared to share some examples with the class. Identify focus areas where you may need additional work.

Visit 5 – Challenges, Changes and Solutions

1. Read Chapter 9 “Training Habits to Embrace and to Avoid,” Chapter 10 “Middle- Years Topic Pool,” Chapter 11 “Cyber Parenting in the Digital Age” and Appendix C “The ‘Talk’”
2. Discuss as parents and then with your middle aged children some generic pre-planned responses to a range of potential situation?
3. Discuss as parents a plan for “The Talk” using Appendix C. Also consider what additional resources you may need to help you implement your plan.
4. Discuss as parents the use of technology and Internet access in your family.