



Tipping Point: Parent Cue

WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT:

Here is an overview of what we're talking about. Listed below the summary is a "parent cue" to help you dialog with your child about the session. The question is intended not just to be asked by you, but to be responded to by **BOTH** of you. Use this opportunity to find out what God is teaching your child, and allow your child to see what God is teaching you as well.

Tipping Point:

Series Overview

There are moments when we get a bigger glimpse of God, moments when we see a bigger picture of who He is. One of those moments is the Christmas story. The birth of Christ was the "tipping point" . . . the point when everything changed. Before that, God was distant. And there was a reason for it—He is holy. But with His birth, He came close and showed us what grace meant. When we remember the Christmas story, we get a glimpse of a God who is both holiness and grace. Not just one, but both.

Session One: Holiness (Dec. 11)

Sometimes you can talk about something without talking about it all. (For example, that last statement.) This week, we're not going to talk about Christmas. Yes, that's right. And there's a reason—we need to go back to the Old Testament. Because while Christmas was an "O Holy Night" moment, we can't fully understand what "holy" means until we see how people interacted with God in the Old Testament. When we do, we get a glimpse of a God who is more than just a buddy, more than just a friend, more than just an advocate—He is holy. And that's a very good thing.

Session One Parent Cue: When you think of God, do you think of Him as approachable or distant? Why?

Session Two: Grace (Dec. 18)

The Christmas story is a story of grace. Grace meant God came close. Grace meant that every one of us can connect with God through Jesus in a more personal way. Christmas was the tipping point. But God didn't become less holy, and more grace. In fact, He was and is still both. And we are challenged to live our lives in the balance of both holiness and grace in how we interact with God and the world around us.

Session Two Parent Cue: In the Christmas story, how do you see both the holiness of God and the grace of God?

Fighting for the Heart

Create a culture of unconditional love in your home to fuel the emotional and moral health of your teen.

A DIVINE COLLISION

By Sarah Anderson

XP3: Tipping Point Parent Cue

Prior to becoming a mom I stocked up on every kind of parenting book you could imagine—starting with those addressing infancy, but going all the way through adolescence as well. I sifted through articles and books dealing with all sorts of issues that extended far into the future. And what I found as a new mom navigating the tricky waters of parenthood was that every book, every article, every person while having great intentions in the process, was setting me up for failure. They each described what they saw the perfect parent as—and it didn't take an expert to see that I was far from perfect.

Not more than a few weeks after my little boy was born I shelved all of the books. They may have had a good goal in mind, but all they really accomplished was getting me to obsess over who I was supposed to be as mom—what I should be doing to further my son's learning and his understanding. And every time I read any of these things all I did was feel behind. Essentially, the books were the terrible intersection of expectations of who the world thought I should be, who I even thought I should be, and the reality of who I really was. And where the two met, I found myself sorely lacking.

Maybe you can relate. The days of babies and all that they entail may be far behind you, but chances are you understand living in the tension of expectation and reality when it comes to parenting your teenager. In fact, in this stage of life, you probably feel even more of a weight than I do. This isn't just about deciding when to start solids or whether you should teach sign language to your newborn. Parenting has higher stakes these days. For you, in this stage of life, it is about freedom, trust, maturity—the hope that what you are doing and the way you are parenting is effective in shaping your teenager into exercising freedom responsibly, earning your trust and maturing well. And for many of you, as you reach these critical years of identity shaping for what started as a helpless little life in your hands and has fast become a fiercely independent person, you may feel a bit like I did in the early days of my son's life. The task at hand is huge. And the fear of messing up, of letting our kids down, of letting *ourselves* down can weigh heavily on every decision we make.

Live here long enough and you just may start to go a little crazy. You may start to beat yourself up, feel defeated, and maybe even flirt with the idea of throwing in the towel—tricking yourself into believing that its too late to become the perfect parent—or even the parent your child needs. Maybe you feel paralyzed by the burden of expectation and the disappointment that is a reality in your life. Maybe you are starting to believe that you can't ever be who your child deserves and who you aspire to be, and both of you are doomed because of it.

When in the throes of my own insecurity and self-doubt as a parent, after working myself into a frenzy over the fear of messing up—messing our little boy up—as we fumble forward in our parenting journey, my husband told me this. He said, "Love covers a multitude of sins". Wise words, don't you think? And I have to believe they are more than that. They are true words. They are resilient words. They are assuring, hopeful and freeing words.

Being a parent is complicated. We are given the chance every day to mess up, and often do so without even realizing we have done it. But thankfully what our kids need more from us than anything else is the belief that though we may not have always gotten it right, though *they* may not always get it right, where love is present, mistakes are covered.

What if our greatest fears for them are realized, and we believe it was because we didn't parent the way we should? What if our greatest hopes are let down and somehow it was our own fault? What if our expectations disappoint and the reality frustrates—for us and for them? Love your child. Love your teenager. Just love them. It covers all the mistakes you know you made, and even the ones you made without ever knowing. We can learn to live in the sometimes terrible intersection of expectation and reality, when what we find in that junction is love. Love covers a multitude of sins, of mistakes—even parenting mistakes.

XP3: Tipping Point Parent Cue

It is right that we take the time this season to talk about learning to live in the crossroad of how we wish things to be and how things truly are. Because Christmas is nothing if not a holy intersection—a divine collision—where what people were desperate to have (a holy God) collided with reality (a sinful world). And what they discovered in the fall out was a man, who was also God, and called Himself love. Love covers a multitude of sins. And that makes it a powerful thing indeed.

What if these next couple of weeks you cut yourself some slack? So you aren't the super parent you think you should be. Your parenting fallacies may have created some wounds in the people you care about the most. Pick yourself up, move forward. Love. You may have messed up in the past, and you are sure to do it in the future. But keep loving. Its effects reach farther than we can even begin to imagine—in a good way. And a legacy of love may even be a better legacy than one of perfection anyway. And that is something worth celebrating.

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