

# Discussion Guide

You can enhance your growth in parenting skills by conversing with other parents. Folks just like you have encountered similar challenges and struggled with the same kinds of problems with their kids. It's time to talk it over!

The following pages offer you a chance to compare notes. These pages should also help you encourage and support one another in the difficult, though highly rewarding task of raising children into happy, healthy adults. This guide will take you through three steps for reviewing and discussing each chapter of *Making Children Mind without Losing Yours*.

*First, recall the chapter.* This is your opportunity to think back through the chapter themes and talk about how those themes made practical impact. Give everyone a chance to explain what things “rang a bell.”

*Second, respond to the text.* Looking at two or three quotes from the text should spark deeper discussion—or even a bit of controversy.

*Third, reflect together.* Here you'll find specific questions related to points made in the chapter. Choose any or all, depending on the amount of time you have for your study.

Keep in mind that your discussion will flow better if you make it a goal to stay as open-ended as possible. In other words, sometimes you'll just ask for what “rang a

bell” and let the time be taken up with the responses. At other times you’ll want to move through the specific questions. Be sure to start and end your time in prayer and always be willing to share the leadership. (Rotating the leadership week to week is a great option.)

Why not provide a little snack too? But however you choose to use this guide, I offer my best wishes for your enjoyment and success in exploring the blessed thrills and spills of parenthood.

Remember, the goal is to be a good parent—not necessarily a great one. And here’s the Midas Muffler guarantee of parenthood: If you’re a good parent, you’ll end up with a great kid!

—Dr. Kevin Leman

## Chapter One

# It’s a Jungle Out There! Grab a Vine

### ✓ Recall the chapter

- Choose a portion of this chapter that had particular impact on you. Tell other group members how this idea or issue “rang a bell” with you.
- What personal story or experience comes to mind in relation to these chapter themes: (1) *using principles of reality discipline with children*, or (2) *giving*

*and receiving unconditional love?* Talk about it!

## ✓ Respond to the text

How do you react to the text quotations below? For each, tell *how it applies*—or could apply—to your own family situation. If possible, offer a *personal example* from your experience with the issue.

From page 20: Don't be afraid to let your kids fail. Too many parents worry that failure will scar their children's self-esteem. As a result the parents cheat, change the rules, pretend the child didn't fail, or keep the child from trying anything new. They feel guilty for not protecting their youngsters from such failure, and that guilt propels all sorts of bad decisions.

From page 27: God's love for us is *unconditional*. He loves us just because we are who we are, imperfect and prone to make mistakes. And he wants us to love our children in the same unconditional way. The desire to love as unconditionally as possible is prerequisite #1 for a parent who wants to practice reality discipline.

## ✓ Reflect together

Discuss one or more of the following, as time permits:

1. Dr. Leman begins by talking about our parenting fears. When have you most powerfully felt the fear of making a mistake with your child?
2. How can we parents *learn* from our mistakes?
3. In your opinion, to what extent does it “take a village” to raise a child? Do you agree with Dr. Le-

- man's position on this? Explain.
4. What would you say are some of the differences between a perfect parent and a good parent?
  5. How would you describe the difference between discipline and punishment? between permissiveness and loving nurture?
  6. Offer a definition of reality discipline in one concise sentence. What things about this approach to child rearing make sense to you? What concerns does this approach raise?
  7. As a group, see if you can name all seven principles of reality discipline (without looking back at the text). Tell which principle seems most relevant to a parenting situation you're facing at the moment.
  8. Dr. Leman says: "Kids are overexposed to activities these days." Have you seen this problem in your family? How can parents deal with this?
  9. How does permissiveness "create a monster"? In your own words, summarize the alternative suggested in this chapter.
  10. What other *insights* came to mind from this chapter? What new *questions* surfaced for you? Do you have any *personal applications* to consider? Explain.

## Chapter Two

# Inconsistency— or How to Raise a Yo-Yo

### ✓ Recall the chapter

- Choose a portion of this chapter that had particular

impact on you. Tell other group members how this idea or issue “rang a bell” with you.

- What personal story or experience comes to mind in relation to these chapter themes: (1) *being too authoritarian or too permissive*, or (2) *finding a middle ground between the two extremes*? Talk about it!

## ✓ Respond to the text

How do you react to the text quotations below? For each, tell *how it applies*—or could apply—to your own family situation. If possible, offer a *personal example* from your experience with the issue.

From page 34: If you want disaster and chaos in your life, do *everything* for your children.

From page 39: My years of counseling parents and children have shown me that in a permissive environment the kids rebel. They rebel because they feel anger and hatred toward their parents for a lack of guidelines and limit setting. . . . Children want order in their lives.

From page 44: I’ve never heard one of my young clients (the children) mention “quality time.” All a child knows is that he wants your time and your attention, whether it’s to watch him do somersaults and cartwheels or to take him for a Big Mac. In trying to find time for your children, don’t worry too much about how much “quality” is in it.

## ✓ Reflect together

Discuss one or more of the following, as time permits:

1. What is the “one, essential ingredient” for effective discipline in the home? What evidence do you see of this in your own home these days? in the home where you grew up?
2. What does “love without discipline” look like? Can you give some real-life examples?
3. When do we begin building discipline into our child’s life? Why? How?
4. Why is it important for children to know that they have the right to fail? To what extent did you have this right as a child?
5. How do children learn to make decisions? learn to be responsible and accountable? How well are your own kids doing in these areas?
6. Describe some of the differences between an *authoritative* parent and an *authoritarian* one.
7. When was the last time you held your child accountable for reality, with real-life consequences, as Dr. Leman describes? Tell what happened.
8. What’s the difference between *hearing* your children and *listening* to them?
9. What would it mean for you, in practical terms, to do a better job of giving yourself to your child, as Dr. Leman suggests?
10. What other *insights* came to mind from this chapter? What new *questions* surfaced for you? Do you have any *personal applications* to consider? Explain.

## Chapter Three

# It's All in the Eye of the Beholder

### ✓ Recall the chapter

- Choose a portion of this chapter that had particular impact on you. Tell other group members how this idea or issue “rang a bell” with you.
- What personal story or experience comes to mind in relation to these chapter themes: (1) *responding to your child's perceptions*, or (2) *recognizing how children learn*? Talk about it!

### ✓ Respond to the text

How do you react to the text quotations below? For each, tell *how it applies*—or could apply—to your own family situation. If possible, offer a *personal example* from your experience with the issue.

From page 58: However you deal with powerful and purposive behavior, always keep in mind that every time your child takes a power trip, he or she is on another expedition of learning. He is learning about reality. If he gets away with his power plays, he learns that reality is manipulating and controlling Mom and Dad as much as possible. But if his power plays bear no fruit, he learns a different kind of reality. He learns that reality is being accountable for his actions and that unacceptable behavior has no payoff.

From page 60: For some reason, we don't think children can handle the truth. We tend to "cover" when we talk with them. We don't tell them everything that goes on because we feel they are "too young to understand." Although restraint is needed in some situations, I usually encourage parents to share their real feelings, problems, and concerns.

## ✓ Reflect together

Discuss one or more of the following, as time permits:

1. Where are you in your family-of-origin birth order? Do you find Dr. Leman's descriptions accurate in your case? Explain.
2. How are your own children acting out the characteristics of their birth orders? How, specifically, can your insights about birth order help you be a better parent?
3. Give an example of a child learning the wrong thing through taking a "power trip." Then give an example of good learning through power trips.
4. According to Dr. Leman, what is the most important quality for a parental role model to possess? Why is this?
5. How open are you to honestly sharing your fears and anxieties with your children as they grow older? What might hold you back?
6. Look again at the three reasons it's "worth it" to risk being honest with our children. Which of these benefits do you value the most? Why?
7. Do you agree that "you can't fool a child"? What is your experience with this?
8. Dr. Leman affectionately calls children "the enemy." What does he mean? What is the most subversive

thing kids try to do to parents? What are some solutions?

9. What other *insights* came to mind from this chapter? What new *questions* surfaced for you? Do you have any *personal applications* to consider? Explain.

## Chapter Four

# Why Reward and Punishment Don't Work

### ✓ Recall the chapter

- Choose a portion of this chapter that had particular impact on you. Tell other group members how this idea or issue “rang a bell” with you.
- What personal story or experience comes to mind in relation to these chapter themes: (1) *using reward and punishment*, or (2) *promoting accountability through allowances and chores*? Talk about it!

### ✓ Respond to the text

How do you react to the text quotations below? For each, tell *how it applies*—or could apply—to your own family situation. If possible, offer a *personal example* from your experience with the issue.

From page 69: The emphasis is on the act and not on Justin. Mom does not say, “My, you’re a good boy because you cleaned up the backyard so nicely.” It’s al-

ways a good idea to avoid associating a child's "goodness" with how well he does a certain task.

From page 73: Punishment teaches children that because we—their parents—are bigger and stronger, we can push them around. We can force our will upon them. And because we—the parents—can get away with this, it reinforces the idea in our own minds that it's perfectly all right to force our will upon our children.

From page 81: Through their constant nagging, coaxing, and bribing, parents are teaching their children that when they grow up and get out into life there will always be somebody there to push, motivate, and reward them for their behavior. But of course, life isn't like that.

## ✓ Reflect together

Discuss one or more of the following, as time permits:

1. How would you describe the difference between reward and encouragement?
2. How do you create a "carrot seeker"? Do you have one in your home?
3. Spend some time creating two or three true-to-life stories that would clearly demonstrate the difference between *punishing* a child and *disciplining* a child.
4. Have someone read aloud Hebrews 12:5–11. How does God treat his children as they grow up? What principles here are transferable to your own parenting task?
5. What are the best ways to develop a sound conscience in a child?
6. Do you give your children an allowance? Why or

why not? What is your reaction to Dr. Leman's guidelines for using allowances?

7. When was the last time you “nagged” your child about doing a household chore? How do you think Dr. Leman would advise you in this case?
8. What other *insights* came to mind from this chapter? What new *questions* surfaced for you? Do you have any *personal applications* to consider? Explain.

## Chapter Five

# “Pull the Rug Out and Let the Little Buzzards Tumble”

### ✓ Recall the chapter

- Choose a portion of this chapter that had particular impact on you. Tell other group members how this idea or issue “rang a bell” with you.
- What personal story or experience comes to mind in relation to these chapter themes: (1) *pulling out the rug*, or (2) *giving children choices*, or (3) *earning a child's respect*? Talk about it!

### ✓ Respond to the text

How do you react to the text quotations below? For each, tell *how it applies*—or could apply—to your own family situation. If possible, offer a *personal example* from your experience with the issue.

From page 88: Parents have been sold a bill of goods. They have heard that psychologists believe a child's psyche is so fragile that we shouldn't hurt or upset the child in any way. . . . To say they are too delicate to learn from discipline based on love and reality is foolish.

From page 102: I believe home should be the place to make good or poor choices. The last place home should be is a place where you are punished for making poor choices. In too many homes I see parents making far too much out of too little.

From page 104: I have used this entire chapter to demonstrate one thing—anything is easier than real discipline. It's much easier to be permissive and to just "let it go." And it is even easier to punish because you allow yourself the luxury of letting off steam and you usually don't have to follow through and make sure your child actually learns something.

## ✓ Reflect together

Discuss one or more of the following, as time permits:

1. What does it mean to "pull the rug out"? When have you seen this work in real life?
2. According to Dr. Leman, when is spanking appropriate and inappropriate? Talk about the right and wrong ways to spank. Which of these guidelines did you find most helpful?
3. How is it possible to "spank with love"?
4. Of the six ways to help your child feel loved, which do you hope to practice more skillfully—or frequently—in the days ahead?
5. What is the power behind giving children "the power of choice"? How could this work in your family?

6. Suggest some practical ways parents can earn their children's respect.
7. How did you like the story of Todd and his kitchen-sinked chicken dinner? How would this approach work in your home? Can you offer any of your own suggestions about how to handle a picky eater?
8. Is it true, as Dr. Leman says, that "anything is easier than real discipline"? Explain.
9. What other *insights* came to mind from this chapter? What new *questions* surfaced for you? Do you have any *personal applications* to consider? Explain.

## Chapter Six

# Danger—Super Parent at Work!

### ✓ Recall the chapter

- Choose a portion of this chapter that had particular impact on you. Tell other group members how this idea or issue "rang a bell" with you.
- What personal story or experience comes to mind in relation to these chapter themes: (1) *being a Super Parent*, or (2) *building a healthy family*? Talk about it!

### ✓ Respond to the text

How do you react to the text quotations below? For each, tell *how it applies*—or could apply—to your own family situation. If possible, offer a *personal example*

from your experience with the issue.

From page 117: Whenever I deal with a family who believes it has a “black sheep” child, I frequently ask the entire family to meet with me. It's important that the family see the misbehavior of one child not as just that child's problem. . . . Often the family members are contributing to what is going on.

From page 121: Super Parents depend more on themselves than on God. They may talk about trusting God, but their parenting style reveals that their basic trust is in themselves. They seem to enjoy the role of judge and jury or answer man or lady. They push so hard for excellence that their children are frozen by fear of failure.

From page 123: There is nothing wrong with being human, but there is a great deal wrong with being hypocritical. I believe that when I freely admit my humanness to my children, I am taking advantage of an ideal opportunity to teach them dependence upon the grace of God.

## ✓ Reflect together

Discuss one or more of the following, as time permits:

1. How would you describe the Super Parent Syndrome? Tell about any ways you've suffered from this dreaded disease!
2. Review the four kinds of faulty reasoning that trap Super Parents. Which have plagued you the most? What advice does Dr. Leman offer to parents making each of these mistakes?
3. Why is it so tempting to try to “own” our children?
4. How would you have dealt with Ricky and Bobby at bedtime? In general, what does it take to stop play-

- ing judge-and-jury with our children?
5. Dr. Leman says that failure is good for children. Do you agree? When have you, as an adult, learned something crucial through your failure?
  6. What are some likely results of trying to make all of your child's decisions? What is the alternative?
  7. What was your reaction to the story of Super Mom Michelle? Do you have any similar tendencies as a mom or dad? If so, talk about a practical step you could take to "go on strike."
  8. What other *insights* came to mind from this chapter? What new *questions* surfaced for you? Do you have any *personal applications* to consider? Explain.

## Chapter Seven

# The Way to Be Your Child's Best Friend

### ✓ Recall the chapter

- Choose a portion of this chapter that had particular impact on you. Tell other group members how this idea or issue "rang a bell" with you.
- What personal story or experience comes to mind in relation to this chapter theme of *being your child's best friend*? Talk about it!

## ✓ Respond to the text

How do you react to the text quotations below? For each, tell *how it applies*—or could apply—to your own family situation. If possible, offer a *personal example* from your experience with the issue.

From page 131: Some children reared in authoritarian homes remain “good little boys and girls” until they reach upper adolescence or early adulthood, and then they get their revenge through open rebellion, rejection of their faith, and so on. And I have counseled many adults who don’t rebel until later in life. Many a “mid-life crisis” is a man or a woman working out feelings about an authoritarian upbringing.

From page 133: As you use natural or logical consequences with your child, be willing to explain things but don’t go over and over the ground rules and don’t give a lot of warnings, extra chances, and so on. One of your key goals is to teach your child that consequences in life are real and life doesn’t always give a second chance.

From pages 134–35: Our children are so adept at holding us at bay and making us feel guilty. They have any number of ways of communicating to us that we have to warn them and cajole them and coax them and even bribe them. All of that is nonsense!

## ✓ Reflect together

Discuss one or more of the following, as time permits:

1. When have you been able to effectively communicate: “I love you, but I don’t like what you did”?

- Why is this a difficult thing to do with our children?
2. What is the one basic question kids keep asking their parents? To what extent are *you* still asking it (whether or not your parents are still living)?
  3. Describe the role of “balance” in reality discipline. Assess where you are, at the moment, on the “balance beam” between authoritarian and permissive parenting.
  4. What does it mean to “always keep short accounts” with our children? Can you give a practical example?
  5. How can remorse be a child’s weapon? What can we do when that weapon is pointed at us? (Refer to the story of the nine-year-old daughter who left chores undone.)
  6. Why is it so hard for us to accept dropping down on our child’s “popularity list” when we stand firm for accountability? What helps you most when he or she starts piling on the guilt?
  7. What other *insights* came to mind from this chapter? What new *questions* surfaced for you? Do you have any *personal applications* to consider? Explain.

## Chapter Eight

# When the Nuclear Family Explodes

- ✓ Recall the chapter
- Choose a portion of this chapter that had particular impact on you. Tell other group members how this idea or issue “rang a bell” with you.

- What personal story or experience comes to mind in relation to these chapter themes: (1) *being a single parent*, or (2) *supporting single parents*? Talk about it!

## ✓ Respond to the text

How do you react to the text quotations below? For each, tell *how it applies*—or could apply—to your own family situation. If possible, offer a *personal example* from your experience with the issue.

From pages 142–43: In the first two years the pain will pop up in many surprising ways . . . . Sometimes your children will lash out in anger. If you're nearby, they will lash out at you. (That's the thing about anger; it's not always picky about its target.) Some children will close up, refusing to display emotion. Some will seem self-destructive. Some will stop working at school. Some will just refuse to do anything you ask.

From page 147: Remember that your kid is just a kid. Many of your feelings are "adult" in nature—complex, conflicted. Your child isn't ready for all that. *You* may feel great after unburdening yourself to your listening child, but now the child is bearing your burdens and may crumble underneath that load.

## ✓ Reflect together

Discuss one or more of the following, as time permits:

1. Dr. Leman says most single parents have to deal with an emotional stewpot that accompanies loss.

- Talk about the special emotional dynamics that pervade the single-parent household.
2. What things do you do to take care of yourself? How can you tell when you're not getting enough self-nurture? (Name some of your unique symptoms.)
  3. Dr. Leman advises that we understand our children's pain while not indulging it. What does this mean to you in practical terms?
  4. If you are a single parent, what do you think about the idea of "house rules"? Do you have them? If not, work with other group members to come up with a few you could try in the future.
  5. What does it mean to avoid triangle relationships?
  6. Where do you draw the line between having an older child help out with the younger ones . . . and making a co-parent out of him or her?
  7. Review Dr. Leman's advice about a single parent's love life. What, in his comments, do you find most helpful?
  8. What other *insights* came to mind from this chapter? What new *questions* surfaced for you? Do you have any *personal applications* to consider? Explain.

## Chapter Nine

# Families Don't Blend, They Collide

### ✓ Recall the chapter

- Choose a portion of this chapter that had particular impact on you. Tell other group members how this idea or issue "rang a bell" with you.

- What personal story or experience comes to mind in relation to these chapter themes: (1) *blending a family*, or (2) *dealing with family conflicts*? Talk about it!

## ✓ Respond to the text

How do you react to the text quotations below? For each, tell *how it applies*—or could apply—to your own family situation. If possible, offer a *personal example* from your experience with the issue.

From page 158: The best way to win respect is to *give it*. Sometimes stepparents confess to me that they really don't love their spouse's children. Fine, I say. You don't have to love them, just respect them. At the very least they are human beings who live in your home. They are also the offspring of the one you love. They have feelings and ideas and dreams and goals. The more you listen to them, the more you treat them with honor and respect, the safer they will feel with you. Eventually they will return that respect.

From page 162: Again and again, I've heard about stepchildren's efforts to sabotage the new marriage. . . . There are regular attempts to pose the question, "Who's more important: me or your spouse?"

You can fight and win these battles, but I think it's wiser to step out of the triangle. That is, find visible ways to support your spouse's relationship with his or her children. As the children realize it's not an either-or situation, they'll have less to fight about.

## ✓ Reflect together

Discuss one or more of the following, as time permits:

1. Review all of Dr. Leman's guidelines for family blending: Have each person choose one or more of the guidelines to describe and illustrate for the other participants.
2. Dr. Leman says that, at a wedding, at least six people are getting married. What does he mean?
3. Are you surprised by how long it usually takes to blend a family? In your experience or observation, what things make blending so difficult?
4. What does it mean to "compare rulebooks" in the blended family? How is this beneficial?
5. Why should we look for respect but not necessarily love from stepchildren?
6. What steps can be taken to help kids grieve for the lost past? Why is this often threatening or risky for the adults?
7. What kinds of "grenades" might an ex-spouse toss into the new family? Suggest some fictional explosive scenarios—then talk about possible responses and solutions in your group.
8. What other *insights* came to mind from this chapter? What new *questions* surfaced for you? Do you have any *personal applications* to consider? Explain.

## Chapter Ten

# How to Act When They Act Up

### ✓ Recall the chapter

- Choose a portion of this chapter that had particular impact on you. Tell other group members how this idea or issue “rang a bell” with you.
- What personal story or experience comes to mind in relation to this chapter theme: *dealing with a child’s misbehaviors?*

### ✓ Respond to the text

How do you react to the text quotations below? For each, tell *how it applies*—or could apply—to your own family situation. If possible, offer a *personal example* from your experience with the issue.

From page 172: Every parent should be aware that *most* fears resulting in nightmares, night terrors, and abnormal thoughts and feelings are a direct result of allowing children to watch violence on television. . . . Middle-class fathers of preschool children spent an average of thirty-seven seconds a day with their children—that’s less than five minutes a week! In contrast . . . children watched television fifty-four hours per week!

From page 184: In every way possible, try to convey to your children at an early age that all parts of their bodies are good, wonderful, and given by God. Everything

we are is part of God's plan for our lives. As your children get older (above six) you can start talking about the gift of sex and how Mommy and Daddy make babies.

From pages 186–87: [Parents] want their children to be able to challenge them and to say how they feel, but when they cross that unseen but very real line and become impudent, a little switch goes off inside a parent's brain. A little voice says, *You can't say that to me. Don't you know who I am? I'm your mother!*

## ✓ Reflect together

Discuss one or more of the following, as time permits:

1. Of the eleven behaviors dealt with in this chapter, which are most relevant to your situation these days? How have you been coping so far? What have you found particularly helpful in this chapter?
2. What does Dr. Leman mean by “getting behind your child's eyes”?
3. Dr. Leman says, “One of the best ways to help your children with their fears is to talk about your own fears.” Do you agree? Talk about your own fears as a child. How did your parents respond? What helped you the most to grow out of your fears?
4. Why do siblings fight? Comment on some of the things Dr. Leman suggests we can do to prevent this.
5. What “payoffs” can a child receive from forgetting?
6. Talk about the “specialness” of mother-son and father-daughter relationships. What is the crucial attitude for parents in this relationship?
7. How do you handle tattling in your home? Is your method working? Talk about it!

8. What other *insights* came to mind from this chapter? What new *questions* surfaced for you? Do you have any *personal applications* to consider? Explain.

## Chapter Eleven

# The Daily Battle

### ✓ Recall the chapter

- Choose a portion of this chapter that had particular impact on you. Tell other group members how this idea or issue “rang a bell” with you.
- What personal story or experience comes to mind in relation to these chapter themes: (1) *dealing with the daily battles*, or (2) *learning strategies for conflict resolution with kids*? Talk about it!

### ✓ Respond to the text

How do you react to the text quotations below? For each, tell *how it applies*—or could apply—to your own family situation. If possible, offer a *personal example* from your experience with the issue.

From page 199: The statistics on children who are abused, used, kidnapped, and even killed are rising every year. This is reality and you should take the time to help them understand. You are not trying to frighten them but to make them wise.

From page 206: In order for parents to fulfill their mis-

sion, they must realize that their children want to belong. All children have two basic choices: They can identify themselves with their family or they can identify themselves with their peer group—the other kids on the block or at school. Rest assured, however, that your children will belong somewhere.

From page 209: It's not too hard to understand why a child gets these ideas of power. We really do act rather silly and say some silly things after a child has gone potty. Reinforce the child, yes; but to say, "Ohhhh, would you look at that!" or "Look at the pretty present Festus gave to Mommy," is really making far too much out of a basic act.

## ✓ Reflect together

Discuss one or more of the following, as time permits:

1. What is the typical bedtime routine with your child(ren)? How well is this working to circumvent bedtime battles?
2. How would the "penny game" work at your dinner table? If anyone has tried it—please report!
3. Dr. Leman says: "You can't make another person do anything." If this is true, what is reality discipline's basic alternative? Refer, for instance, to getting Buford up for school in the mornings.
4. Review the suggestions for handling homework problems. Discuss their potential effectiveness in your home.
5. Respond to Dr. Leman's suggestion for helping a child feel "I belong" in the family. Which would you, personally, like to focus on in the days ahead? Why?
6. Is the television a monster in your home? If so, as-

sess the suggested steps to take. Do you have any additional ideas?

7. Talk about your worst and best travel experience, either in your current family or your family of origin when you were a child. What works best to keep “traveling terrors” at bay?
8. What other *insights* came to mind from this chapter? What new *questions* surfaced for you? Do you have any *personal applications* to consider? Explain.

## Chapter Twelve

# Winning Ways

### ✓ Recall the chapter

- Choose a portion of this chapter that had particular impact on you. Tell other group members how this idea or issue “rang a bell” with you.
- What personal story or experience comes to mind in relation to this chapter theme: *parenting strategies for applying reality discipline*? Talk about it!

### ✓ Respond to the text

How do you react to the text quotations below? For each, tell *how it applies*—or could apply—to your own family situation. If possible, offer a *personal example* from your experience with the issue.

From page 219: As you cultivate the skill of active listening, you will do less and less lecturing and giving of

right answers. You will resist the temptation to try to readily solve all the problems in your child's life. And you will do more and more empathizing—letting your child know that you understand how he feels and that you care about his feelings.

From page 223: Never accept excuses. When you begin to accept the child's excuses, you are really tempting him to always point his finger in some other direction than at himself. You encourage him to always find the fault elsewhere and not to face his own responsibilities.

From page 226: Keep in mind that results aren't always evident over the short term. . . . If your child doesn't always respond to the techniques of reality discipline, don't give up. You are going to discipline your child in one way or another, regardless of the results, and you might as well be using a system that is based on Scripture (Eph. 6:4), which will pay off in the long run.

## ✓ Reflect together

Discuss one or more of the following, as time permits:

1. The first two steps when there's a problem are listen and respond to feelings. How good are you at these things? Can you share a recent example?
2. Why is it important to distinguish between getting angry at your child and getting angry at what your child does? How do "I" and "you" statements come into play here?
3. What are some critical differences between praising your child and giving her encouragement? How can praise actually be *discouraging*?
4. How easy or difficult is it for you to say "I love you" to your child(ren)? To your spouse? To yourself?

5. Dr. Leman says that reality discipline “cuts both ways.” What does he mean? How does love play a role?
6. Review the guidelines for using “time out” with children. In your opinion, what are its pros and cons?
7. What other *insights* came to mind from this chapter? What new *questions* surfaced for you? Do you have any *personal applications* to consider? Explain.