

It's not about goals. It's about routines.

We're really excited that you'll be going on this journey with us as we work to create a new normal in your home—**new tiny habits that make a big difference.**

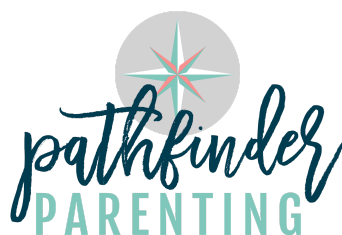
You see, over the years, we've talked to hundreds of moms and dads through our website and our speaking ministry. **Our passion has been to equip parents to create a strong, vibrant family.** We love to speak on all kinds of hard-hitting and even controversial topics—everything from sex education to child discipline to dealing with anger—and many other taboo subjects.

It's not hard to fill a room with parents who want to know about thorny topics. But what we've seen over and over in the lives of parents—and what we've seen over and over in our own parenting—is this: many parents need not just specialized training on niche topics, which is all well and good. **But what every parent needs is a solid foundation:** foundational habits for the home and family life.

We all want to be better parents. If you're reading this, your frustrations with parenting are likely *not* because you're some absentee mom or dad. The fact that you're reading this shows that you really care about connecting with your kids. So your frustrations with parenting are not necessarily because you lack the desire to be a good parent. Furthermore, your frustrations with parenting are likely not because you don't have good enough goals. We all have goals for our kids, and most of them are probably pretty good. We can all benefit from thinking critically about the goals we have for our kids, but most parents' biggest problem is *not* having the wrong goals.

Goals Vs. Systems

The problem is not goals but **systems**. Many parents lack foundational systems or **routines** that make Christian family life work. **And there's a big, big difference between making goals and having a system.** If you're a writer, your *goal* is to write a book. Your *system* is the writing schedule that you follow every week. If you're a business owner, your goal is to build a profitable business. Your system is your sales and marketing processes. If you're a



coach for a sports team, your goal is to win a championship. But your system is what your team does at practice every day. Goals and systems are related but they aren't the same.

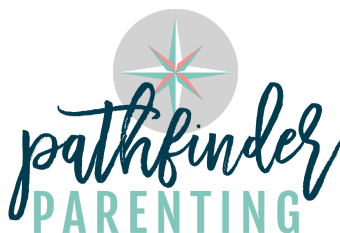
One of our favorite movies is *Hoosiers*. If you've seen it before, you know the plot—and you may even know the plot if you haven't seen it. It's about this basketball coach with a checkered past who comes to coach a high school basketball team in a small, podunk town in rural Indiana. It's the classic sports underdog story. But much to the dismay of the players and a lot of the school parents, this new coach refuses to just let these kids play scrimmages at practice. Instead he drills them on **fundamentals** and does a lot of physical conditioning with them. He's rigorous and disciplined. And while it takes them a while to catch on, eventually he whips this ragtag team into state champions.

You see, the coach saw the team needed more than just a *goal* of winning games. Anyone can have a goal. What they needed was a *system* of practice each day—**they needed routines**. And it was those routines that carried them to victory.

Two Reasons to *Not* Just Focus on Goals

Knowing the difference between a goal and a system is very important when it comes to parenting. It's important for at least two reasons. First reason: if all we do is focus on goals, **then it robs us of joy**. When you're working toward a goal—when the goal is central—you're essentially saying, "I'm not good enough yet, but I will be when I reach my goal." And, quite frankly, this kind of mindset is a recipe for stress. It creates anxiety. Each day your kids show some lack of progress toward your goal, and this causes stress and even sadness.

On the other hand, when you're committed to a *system*—to daily, weekly, and monthly routines—**it massively reduces stress**. So, instead of just having a goal such as, "I want to raise biblically-literate kids," you commit yourself to a system, as in: "I'm going to spend 15 minutes each night reading through a simple Bible curriculum with my kids." Or instead of saying a vague goal, for example: "I want my kids to more responsible," you can commit to a system. That would be: "I will hold my kids accountable to a specific morning, afternoon, and evening routine."



Don't get us wrong. It's not that those goals are *bad*. The goals are great. But if we're always measuring our family or kids up next to our goals, it can lead to a lot of discouragement. Instead, **commitment to a system of routines helps us to be joyful along the way**, without being so fixated on the results.

This leads us to the second reason why focusing on goals isn't all that helpful. The second reason is: **It only gives us an illusion of control**—an illusion that you can control things you can't really control. I don't care how good the parenting guru is: if anyone is selling you the belief that you can guarantee how your kids will turn out, they're a shyster. The wisdom literature in the Bible is very clear on this: yes, there are wise principles for parenting that steers young people in the right direction, and we should avail ourselves to them, but **in a fallen world, things can go wrong**.

As Parents, We Aren't in Ultimate Control.

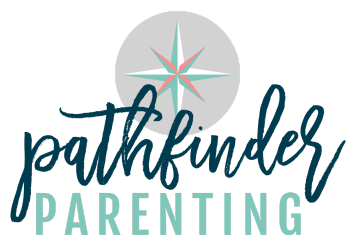
We know this isn't shocking to any of you, but you can't predict the future. Thousands of factors are beyond our control as parents, so when you make lofty, vague goals about the way you want your kids to turn out, and then we grade ourselves as parents solely on those results, **it places too great a weight on our shoulders**.

Last time we checked, **only one Being in the universe has that kind of sovereign control**, and it isn't you. It isn't me. But often our goals subtly give us that impression.

But, if we make a *system*—a series of tiny routines—our focus, then when our kids' progress is slow in any area of life, or if they regress, instead of getting despondent because of a lack of apparent results, **we stay the course because we trust the system**.

Turning Goals Into Routines That Make a Difference

That's what this family curriculum is all about: **tiny habits that make a big difference**. Tiny habits and routines go beyond just *wishing* or *wanting* change to happen. They go beyond just vague goals. They break goals down into practical steps. And when we are committed to those steps, **we can rest knowing we are trying to live out our God-appointed role as parents, leaving the results to him**.



Each of these lessons comes with some homework, an action step. When you learn something new, the only way it can change anything for you is if you put it into practice. But don't worry! **These are small, doable action steps so you don't get overwhelmed.** They might be something you work on yourself, or a tiny habit you begin to implement with your family, but whatever it is we will make them easy to implement. The homework for this first lesson is super easy. Your mission, if you choose to accept it, is to **get a binder.** That's it. Just a three-ring binder. This will be where you can put all your Family Action Kits and other resources we'll give you with each lesson.

Family Action Kits

The monthly Family Action Kits are the heart of Pathfinder Parenting. They are all the *lessons*—the practical, open-and-go lessons—that make up Pathfinder Parenting. You'll get a new kit every month for as long as we exist and as long as you're a member. We'll talk about each element in the Action Kit in depth in the future, but the whole kit is fairly intuitive to use, so you can start using it right away. But, you don't have to start using them. Sometimes starting routines more slowly can help so we don't get overwhelmed and so we actually stick to our new routines. We already have THIS month's kit ready to download on the website, so you can do that whenever you want.

When you get your binder, print out the cover page. You'll find that on this lesson as a download. Just download it and print it out, and you can either hole-punch it as the first page of your binder, or if you have a binder with a clear plastic sleeve, you can just stick it in the front.

Then each month we'll email you to let you know when the new Family Action Kit is available and you can just print the whole thing out and put it in the binder. It's important for you to know we retire these every month, so by printing them out you'll be putting these Action Kits in a place to save them all in one place. And you want to save them even if your family isn't at a point of using them *right now*. But **DON'T** *just* save them to your computer, because if your computer is anything like mine, old files just sort of get forgotten about and your computer just becomes an abyss of old stuff you always intended to read but never quite got around to. By printing it out, it's your way of putting feet to the fire and **actually using it.**



There are all kinds items in the Kit. There's the **Words of Wisdom Monthly Map**. This is a Bible study, a devotional you do with your kids, built around a specific Proverb in the Bible that will sort of become your focus for the month as a family. It also includes a reading list of Scriptures you can use throughout the month that are all in line with the theme of that month's proverb—so you'll have an easy way to do regular devotions with your kids all month long using a really simple format.

The Kit also has something called **Table Talk**, which has a bunch of discussion starters for mealtimes—it's just a simple way to connect with your family over food. There's another activity called the **Family Adventure Night**: which is a really simple, cheap or free activity your family can do together that's fun and makes memories with your kids. There's also an activity called **Movie Night**. This is a lot more than just an excuse to watch a movie together. It's actually a discussion guide for a specific movie to train your kids in media discernment—looking for the messages and themes hidden in TV and film to equip them to face our media saturated world.

Finally, there's also something called **Hot Off the Press** where we give you a script to share a news story with your kids so you can teach them how to see current events in the light of eternity.

Now, as we said, we've designed these so you can start using all these items in the Kit right away. **Just follow the directions and go.** Make these *routines* in your home, the systems you follow. And over the coming weeks, we'll be talking about not just these routines, but many others.

Action Step!

Get your binder ready to go and get ready to learn.

