

EMPOWERED *To Connect*

Insights & Gifts Video Series Discussion Guide

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Contents

Introduction

Insight 1: Explore Your Expectations	1
Insight 2: Simplify Your Life	2
Insight 3: Provide Familiarity and Continuity	3
Insight 4: Be Fully Present	4
Insight 5: Expect Long-Term Challenges	5
Insight 6: Embrace the Complex Needs of Your Child	6
Insight 7: Create a Balance of Nurture & Structure	7
Gift 1: Give Your Child Voice	8
Gift 2: Give Your Child Nurture	9
Gift 3: Give Your Child Shared Power	10
Gift 4: Give Your Child Predictability	11
Gift 5: Give Your Child Permission to Process Feelings	12
Gift 6: Give Your Child Playfulness	13
Gift 7: Give Your Child Healthy Parents with Good Self-Care	14
Where Do We Go from Here?	15

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Insights & Gifts Video Series Discussion Guide

Introduction

We are delighted that you are taking the time to engage the Insights & Gifts Video Series Discussion Guide. Our hope and prayer is that the videos in the Insights & Gifts Video Series, together with this discussion guide, will help you discover greater joy and purpose as you love and care for the children that God has placed in your life.

The Insights & Gifts Video Series was developed in 2010 in partnership with the TCU Institute for Child Development (www.child.tcu.edu). This video series was created to introduce parents – both those who were considering adopting or providing foster care as well as those who have already adopted or are currently fostering – to some of the foundational principles and strategies developed and taught by Dr. Karyn Purvis and her colleagues. Dr. Purvis is the Director of the TCU Institute of Child Development, and her calling and passion is to help children from hard places and empower their parents and caregivers. We are confident that this passion, as well as her insight and wisdom, will be evident as you work through this resource.

How to Best Use this Resource

This discussion guide was designed by Empowered To Connect primarily for use in a small group setting where you have the opportunity to share openly and learn from others. However, we believe that you will also find this video series and discussion guide beneficial for individual use or use as a couple.

Each of the seven insights and seven gifts is featured in a short video segment which are available at <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/insights-gifts-video-series/>, where they can be viewed online or downloaded free of charge. A DVD containing all of the video segments in the series is also available for a charge of \$10. To order the Insights & Gifts Video Series DVD simply email us at info@empoweredtoconnect.org.

After viewing a video segment we encourage you to thoughtfully consider and discuss the *Questions for Discussion* in this discussion guide. We have also included additional questions for each segment, *Questions for Going Deeper*, that require a bit more self-evaluation and vulnerability. You should not feel obligated to answer any question if you are not comfortable doing so. At the same time, however, we encourage you to not allow fear, or even pain from your past, to keep you from challenging yourself by engaging these important questions.

Before You Get Started

Before you get started, we encourage you to watch *Children from Hard Places* (<http://empoweredtoconnect.org/children-from-hard-places/>), in which Dr. Purvis briefly explains the risk factors that impact so many of our children. This video will provide you with the context and understanding you will need as you work through this resource.

In addition, we encourage you to read (or re-read) *The Connected Child*, as well as the companion study guide, *Created To Connect*. The study guide can be downloaded free of charge at <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/guide/>.

We hope that you are greatly blessed and encouraged by the Insights & Gifts Video Series and this discussion guide.

***For more adoption and foster care resources, visit
www.empoweredtoconnect.org.***

Insight 1: Explore Your Expectations

Questions for Discussion:

1. What were your motivations for adopting or becoming a foster parent? If you are still considering adoption/foster care or in the waiting phase, what are your motivations for wanting to adopt or become a foster parent?
2. What expectations do you have for how the adoption or foster care journey will unfold?
3. Read Luke 14:25-33 and Matthew 10:37-39. What does it mean for you to “count the cost” of the adoption or foster care journey? How can you best do that on an ongoing basis in relation to your journey?
4. Regardless of where you are in the adoption or foster care journey, what steps can you take to become better educated and prepared?

Questions for Going Deeper:

1. Are there experiences in your past (e.g., your own hurts, losses, trauma or grief) that you have not fully dealt with or that remain unresolved? If so, what are some things that you can do in order to deal with those past hurts and begin the process of making sense of them?
2. Have you already experienced that some of your expectations were unrealistic or unmet? How have those unrealistic or unmet expectations affected you and your relationship with your child? What can you do to develop more realistic expectations?

Additional Resources:

- **Video:** *Looking at Ourselves to Help Our Children Heal* – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/looking-at-ourselves-to-help-our-children-heal/>
- **Article:** *Adoption from the Inside Out*, by Michael Monroe & Dr. Karyn Purvis, *Adoption Today* (Dec/Jan 2009) – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/adoption-from-the-inside-out/>
- **Audio:** *Counting the Cost: Preparing for the Adoption Journey* – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/counting-the-cost-preparing-for-the-adoption-journey/>
- **Book:** Chapter 2 of *Wounded Children Healing Homes*, by Jayne E. Schooler, Betsy Keefer Smalley and Timothy J. Callahan

Insight 2: Simplify Your Life

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does it mean to “simplify your life”?
2. In terms of your adoption or foster care journey, why is it important for parents of children from hard places to continually focus on keeping their lives (and the lives of their children) relatively simple?
3. Is your life currently “simple enough” in terms of what will likely be required to help your child adjust and/or continue to heal? If not, what are some specific aspects of your life that may need to be further simplified?

Questions for Going Deeper:

1. What are the biggest obstacles that stand in the way of you simplifying your life? What sacrifices might your family and you need to make in order to achieve the necessary level of simplicity?
2. Even if you are not able to immediately simplify your life to the degree that Dr. Purvis advocates, nonetheless what are three things that you can do in the short-term to simplify your life in a meaningful way in order to benefit both you and your child?

Additional Resources:

- **Book:** pp. 172-198 of *Nurturing Adoptions*, by Deborah Gray
- **Article:** [Establishing a Routine](http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/articles.php?aid=1095), by Bonnie Perkel, *Adoptive Families Magazine* – <http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/articles.php?aid=1095>

Insight 3: Provide Familiarity and Continuity

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some things that are familiar and comforting to you (i.e., people, places, things, foods, routines, etc.)? Describe the impact that the loss of virtually all of those things would likely have on you?
2. List some things that your child (or the child that you are planning to adopt or foster) has lost or been forced to “give up”? What impacts might those losses have on him/her?
3. Another way to think of providing familiarity and continuity is in terms of providing and maintaining connections to your child’s past. What are some ways that you can provide your child with connections to his/her past? What are some other ways that you might be able to provide familiarity and continuity for your child?
4. Read Philippians 2:1-11. How might Paul’s instruction to love others selflessly and his description of Christ’s example of humility in coming to us serve as a guide for us as adoptive or foster parents as we seek to love and care for our children?

Questions for Going Deeper:

1. Do you ever feel, or are you afraid you might feel in the future, threatened by your child’s past? Do you ever feel like you are in competition with your child’s past? Why or why not?
2. Does the thought of providing your child continuity and familiarity or promoting connections to the people, places or things in his/her past in any way encroach on your sense of connection with your child and your “claims” to him/her? Why or why not?

Additional Resources:

- **Article:** Transition and Attachment, by the Empowered To Connect Team – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/transition-and-attachment/>
- **Book:** pp. 172-198 of *Nurturing Adoptions*, by Deborah Gray
- **Article:** Helping Your Child Say Goodbye, by Kathy Sullivan, *Adoptive Families Magazine* – <http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/articles.php?aid=345>

Insight 4: Be Fully Present

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does it mean to be “fully present” with your child?
2. In the video, Dr. Purvis focuses on proximity, safe touch and eye contact as three important ways that we as parents can be “fully present” and foster connections with our children. What are some other practical ways that you can be fully present – both physically and emotionally – with your child?
3. What is the purpose of being “fully present”? What benefits or positive impacts can it have for your child? For you? What challenges can the failure to be “fully present” create for you and your child?

Questions for Going Deeper:

1. Do you find it easy or natural to be fully present with your child and to engage in these kinds of interactions with your child? If not, what challenges have you experienced?
2. What are some things that can “stand in the way” of you being fully present with your child?
3. The need to be fully present with your child clearly suggests a way of parenting that is likely to be very inconvenient at times. What is your reaction to this?

Additional Resources:

- **Video:** *Looking at Ourselves to Help Our Children Heal* – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/looking-at-ourselves-to-help-our-children-heal/>
- **Video:** *Healthy Touch DVD* (produced by the TCU Institute of Child Development; available for purchase at <http://www.child.tcu.edu/DVD%20sales.asp>)
- **Book:** Chapter 5 of *Wounded Children Healing Homes*, by Jayne E. Schooler, Betsy Keefer Smalley and Timothy J. Callahan

Insight 5: Expect Long-Term Challenges

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some challenging behaviors or responses that your child has that you did not expect? If you are still considering adoption or foster care or currently in the waiting phase, consider some of the challenging behaviors and responses that Dr. Purvis described and discuss how you might react.
2. How does Scripture define compassion? What does it mean to have true compassion for a child from a hard place? Why is having compassion for our children important?
3. Dr. Purvis talks about the importance of having a plan to deal with challenges that you face as you travel the adoption or foster care journey. What are some key components of a good plan to deal with long-term challenges?

Questions for Going Deeper:

1. How prepared are you for the long-term challenges that you may encounter on your adoption or foster care journey? Specifically, what have you done (or are you currently doing) in terms of educating yourself and connecting with other adoptive and foster parents who understand what it looks like to navigate the journey successfully?
2. Is it discouraging to hear that adoptive and foster parents should expect to face long-term challenges as they love and care for their child? Why or why not?

Additional Resources:

- **Book:** Ch. 6 of *The Connected Child*, by Dr. Karyn Purvis, Dr. David Cross and Wendy Lyons Sunshine
- **Book:** Ch. 2 of *Created To Connect*, by Dr. Karyn Purvis and Michael & Amy Monroe – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/created-to-connect-study-guide/>
- **Article:** [Six Words for Adoptive Parents to Live By](http://empoweredtoconnect.org/six-words-for-adoptive-parents-to-live-by/), by Dr. Karyn Purvis and Dr. David Cross – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/six-words-for-adoptive-parents-to-live-by/>
- **Book:** Ch. 4 of *Wounded Children Healing Homes*, by Jayne E. Schooler, Betsy Keefer Smalley and Timothy J. Callahan

Insight 6: Embrace the Complex Needs of Your Child

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some of the unique needs that your child has (or may have)?
2. When a child begins to exhibit challenging behaviors, parents often report that those behaviors soon become all that they are able to see when they look at and engage with their child. What are some ways that can help you keep your focus on your “whole child” – his/her past, present and future as well as his/her body, soul and spirit – so that you can love and care for him/her in a holistic and healing way?
3. In seeking to address the complex needs of a child from a hard place, many parents are inclined to ask the question “is it adoption related or not” when dealing with misbehavior and other similar challenges. Is that a helpful or useful question to ask? Should the way you parent your child from a hard place and respond to behaviors and challenges depend on whether or not you assume or perceive those behaviors or challenges to be “adoption related”? Why or why not?

Questions for Going Deeper:

1. What aspects of your “whole child” do you sometimes overlook or fail to embrace? How might being more holistic actually become a source of hope for you and your child?
2. Are you sometimes tempted to ignore or overlook the unique needs of your child as well as their history? If so, why? What impact might ignoring or overlooking those unique needs have on the way you parent and relate to your child?
3. On the other hand, what are the possible implications if you allow your child’s unique needs and his/her history to completely define who he/she is and his/her potential and future?

Additional Resources:

- **Video:** *Focusing on the Whole Child* – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/focusing-on-the-whole-child/>
- **Book:** Ch. 1 of *Created To Connect*, by Dr. Karyn Purvis and Michael & Amy Monroe – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/created-to-connect-study-guide/>
- **Article:** *Becoming More Real to Our Kids*, by Michael Monroe, *Adoption Today* (February 2010) – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/becoming-more-real-to-our-kids/>

Insight 7: Create a Balance of Nurture & Structure

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is a balance of nurture and structure important for children from hard places?
2. Why is it difficult at times to balance nurture and structure when dealing with your child? Does it seem that striking such a balance would be virtually impossible in some situations? Give specific examples?
3. Overall, do you tend more toward structure or nurture in your parenting style? If you have more than one child, is your approach the same for all of your children or does it differ from child to child?
4. In the video, Dr. Purvis quotes Ephesians 6:4 from the King James Version of the Bible. *The Message* phrases this passage as follows: “*Fathers, don’t exasperate your children by coming down hard on them. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master.*” In light of this and other passages of Scripture, discuss the balance of both nurture and structure that is present in how God relates to us as His children.

Questions for Going Deeper:

1. Growing up did your parents place more emphasis on structure or nurture, or was there a balance in your home? How does your experience growing up (in terms of how you were parented) influence the way you are currently parenting (or likely to parent)?
2. How do you view the way God loves and relates to you in terms of nurture and structure? Does this view of how God loves and relates to you influence the way you love and relate to your child? If so, how?
3. What are some aspects of your parenting approach that may be a little out of balance? Be specific. What are some ways you can attain more balance (i.e., a balance of high nurture and high structure) in your parenting?

Additional Resources:

- **Book:** Ch. 6 of *The Connected Child*, by Dr. Karyn Purvis, Dr. David Cross and Wendy Lyons Sunshine
- **Book:** Ch. 6 of *Created To Connect*, by Dr. Karyn Purvis and Michael & Amy Monroe – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/created-to-connect-study-guide/>
- **Article:** [The Privilege of Saying Yes](http://empoweredtoconnect.org/the-privilege-of-saying-yes/), by Amy Monroe – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/the-privilege-of-saying-yes/>

Gift 1: Give Your Child Voice

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is it important that you give your child voice? Why is this especially important for children from hard places? What might make it difficult to give your child voice at times?
2. How might you respond if your child uses his/her voice to express thoughts or feelings that are painful – for the child and/or for you? How should you respond if your child uses his/her voice in a hurtful or disrespectful manner?
3. Keeping in mind that children must always be respectful, are there any thoughts or feelings that your child should not be able to “give voice” to? Why or why not?
4. What are some practical things that you can do to better ensure that you are giving your child voice?

Questions for Going Deeper:

1. Did you have a voice growing up? Whether yes or no, what impact does your experience growing up have in terms of whether and how you give voice to your child?
2. Fundamental to effectively giving your child voice is how you as a parent respond to your child. Thinking holistically, what are some important aspects of your response to your child as he/she begins to use his/her voice to express his/her needs, wants and feelings?

Additional Resources:

- **Video:** *The Importance of Giving Voice to Children* – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/the-importance-of-giving-voice-to-children/>
- **Article:** *Embracing the Grief of Adoption*, by Michael Monroe, *Adoption Today* (April 2010) – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/embracing-the-grief-of-adoption/>
- **Book:** Ch. 5 of *The Connected Child*, by Dr. Karyn Purvis, Dr. David Cross and Wendy Lyons Sunshine

Gift 2: Give Your Child Nurture

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is nurture critically important for children from hard places?
2. Does intentionally providing nurture to your child mean that you will have to lessen the structure that you provide or lower the standards in your parenting? Why or why not? How can you both provide a balanced level of both nurture and structure in your parenting, especially in response to misbehavior?
3. Does providing nurture to your child come naturally to you? Does receiving nurture come naturally to your child? What can you do to ensure that your child receives the nurture that he/she needs?
4. Parents of older children sometimes find it difficult to provide nurture to their child because of the child's age. What are some practical things that you can do to provide nurture for an older child? Even though your child may be older, are there some specific things that you can (and should) do to provide your child some of the nurture that he/she may have missed out on when he/she was younger?

Question for Going Deeper:

1. Do you view God primarily as a Heavenly Father that provides nurture or structure to you as His child? How might that affect or impact how you approach and interact with your child?

Additional Resources:

- **Book:** Ch. 8 of *The Connected Child*, by Dr. Karyn Purvis, Dr. David Cross and Wendy Lyons Sunshine
- **Book:** Ch. 8 of *Created To Connect*, by Dr. Karyn Purvis and Michael & Amy Monroe – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/created-to-connect-study-guide/>
- **Video:** *Healthy Touch DVD* (produced by the TCU Institute of Child Development; available for purchase at <http://www.child.tcu.edu/DVD%20sales.asp>)
- **Video:** *Playful Interaction DVD* (produced by the TCU Institute of Child Development; available for purchase at <http://www.child.tcu.edu/DVD%20sales.asp>)
- **Book:** Myth 2 of “*Parenting is Your Highest Calling*” and *8 Other Myths That Trap us in Worry and Guilt*, by Leslie Leyland Fields

Gift 3: Give Your Child Shared Power

Questions for Discussion:

1. Practical examples of sharing power with your child include providing your child with appropriate choices and making compromises with your child when possible. What effects or impacts will giving your child choices or making compromises with him/her, even when he/she is young, likely have on your child? On you?
2. Discuss some common situations in which you can give choices and/or make compromises?
3. What are some risks of sharing power with your child? Should these risks limit your willingness or ability to share appropriate levels of power with your child?
4. What are some key things that you can do to help ensure that sharing power is an effective strategy to help your child learn, grow and heal?

Questions for Going Deeper:

1. Did your parents share power with you growing up? Whether yes or no, what impact does your experience growing up have in terms of whether and how you might be willing to share power with your child?
2. Many parents are concerned that by sharing power with their child they will be perceived as being weak or permissive. How would you respond to that? Consider whether God shares power with us as His children? If so, does that diminish His power or authority in any way?

Additional Resources:

- **Book:** Ch. 6 of *The Connected Child*, by Dr. Karyn Purvis, Dr. David Cross and Wendy Lyons Sunshine
- **Video:** *Parenting Strategies That Connect* – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/parenting-strategies-that-connect/>
- **Video:** *Empowering, Connecting and Correcting Principles DVD* (produced by the TCU Institute of Child Development; available for purchase at <http://www.child.tcu.edu/DVD%20sales.asp>)

Gift 4: Give Your Child Predictability

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is predictability an important gift for parents to give to their child?
2. What are some practical ways to give your child the gift of predictability?
3. The type of predictability that Dr. Purvis speaks of requires parents to be both intentional and flexible with their kids and will likely require a greater commitment of time on the part of parents. What challenges might arise as you try to implement this approach?

Questions for Going Deeper:

1. Giving your child predictability (as well as the other gifts) often requires sacrifices on the part of the parents. What are some sacrifices that you may need to make to provide your child with this gift?
2. Parents often find that others (such as friends and family) won't always understand or agree about the importance of giving children the gift of predictability. They may argue that we shouldn't accommodate or make our kids so dependent, pointing to the fact that the world will not treat them this way as they get older and are out on their own. How would you respond? How can you help others around you better understand the importance of predictability (as well as the other gifts our children need)?

Additional Resources:

- **Book:** Ch. 4 of *The Connected Child*, by Dr. Karyn Purvis, Dr. David Cross and Wendy Lyons Sunshine
- **Book:** Ch. 4 of *Created To Connect*, by Dr. Karyn Purvis and Michael & Amy Monroe – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/created-to-connect-study-guide/>

Gift 5: Give Your Child Permission to Process Feelings

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is providing an environment where your child feels safe and accepted important?
2. What is the difference between “actual safety” and “felt safety”? Why is “felt safety” so important for children from hard places?
3. Should it be okay for your child to express any feeling or emotion that he/she has? Why or why not? Should there be any limits on your child’s ability to express his/her feelings? If so, what are they?

Question for Going Deeper:

1. Are there certain feelings that your child has (or may have) that trouble you or that are threatening to you in some way? If so, how do you typically react? How should you react to these feelings?

Additional Resources:

- **Book:** Ch. 8 of *The Connected Child*, by Dr. Karyn Purvis, Dr. David Cross and Wendy Lyons Sunshine
- **Article:** [Embracing the Grief of Adoption](http://empoweredtoconnect.org/embracing-the-grief-of-adoption/), by Michael Monroe, *Adoption Today* - <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/embracing-the-grief-of-adoption/>
- **Article:** [Becoming More Real to Our Kids](http://empoweredtoconnect.org/becoming-more-real-to-our-kids/), by Michael Monroe, *Adoption Today* - <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/becoming-more-real-to-our-kids/>
- **Video:** *More Than Just Words: A More Complete Look at How to Communicate Effectively with Your Child About Adoption*, by Amy & Michael Monroe – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/more-than-just-words/>

Gift 6: Give Your Child Playfulness

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some of the tangible benefits of play and being playful for children from hard places?
2. What are some practical uses of play and playfulness for parents of children from hard places as it relates to teaching children values, dealing with behaviors and helping them learn self-control?
3. Dr. Purvis talks about the fact that parents may need to teach their children how to play. How can you teach your child how to play?
4. Why is it important to allow your child to lead as much as possible in your play with them?

Questions for Going Deeper:

1. Did you play much growing up? Did your parents frequently engage in play with you? Generally speaking, were your parents playful at home? How do you think your experience growing up impacts your willingness and ability to be playful with your child?
2. Do you play with your child regularly? Do you find it easy or natural to play and be playful with your child? How might you be able to increase the time that you spend playing and being playful with your child?

Additional Resources:

- **Video:** *Playful Interaction DVD* (produced by the TCU Institute of Child Development; available for purchase at <http://www.child.tcu.edu/DVD%20sales.asp>)
- **Book:** Ch. 8 of *The Connected Child*, by Dr. Karyn Purvis, Dr. David Cross and Wendy Lyons Sunshine

Gift 7: Give Your Child Healthy Parents with Good Self-Care

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is it important for parents to practice self-care as they travel the adoption and foster care journey? Why is it often so difficult to do so? What keeps us from practicing good self-care?
2. In what ways are children from hard places likely to suffer if their parents do not practice good self-care?
3. What are some practical and effective ways that you have practiced good self-care?

Questions for Going Deeper:

1. What are some areas in which you have not practiced adequate self-care or, if you are still in the adoption or foster care process, might have a tendency to neglect the need for self-care? What has been the consequence or result?
2. Is there a risk that your need for adequate self-care can actually become an excuse for you not to make the sacrifices you need to make in order to fully commit yourself to help your child heal? If so, how can you guard against this?
3. What are some practical steps that you can begin to take now in order to ensure that you will practice (better) self-care?

Additional Resources:

- **Book:** Ch. 12 of *Wounded Children Healing Homes*, by Jayne E. Schooler, Betsy Keefer Smalley and Timothy J. Callahan
- **Video:** *Looking at Ourselves to Help Our Children Heal* – <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/looking-at-ourselves-to-help-our-children-heal/>

Where Do You Go from Here?

Our hope and prayer is that the Insights & Gifts Video Series has been informative, challenging and encouraging to you. But precisely because this is a journey, we want to encourage you to keep going – *keep learning, keep praying and keep making connections with others who understand the journey God has called you to and are willing to share in it with you.*

At this point we believe it is critical for you to ask the question “where do we go from here?” rather than “where do I go from here?” We believe that this amazing and challenging journey is not meant to be traveled alone. We hope that you have already found new traveling companions and deepened your connections with fellow journey mates through the course of the series. At the very least, we hope that you are more determined than ever before to find others with whom you can share this journey, each and every step of the way.

Of course we believe that one of the best places to travel this journey together with others is in the context of your local church. If you have questions about how to establish a ministry or support group for other adoptive and foster parents, please check out the resources provided by Tapestry, the adoption and foster care ministry at Irving Bible Church, at www.tapestryministry.org. You can also contact Tapestry via email at tapestry@irvingbible.org.

If you haven't already, we encourage you to read (or re-read) *The Connected Child*, as well as the companion study guide, *Created To Connect*. The study guide can be downloaded free of charge at <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/guide/>. Also, be sure to watch the other videos, listen to the audio and read the articles that are all available through Empowered To Connect – and be sure to go to the Empowered To Connect website and sign-up to receive email updates about future resources.

Finally, we strongly encourage you to invest in the training DVDs that are available for purchase through the TCU Institute of Child Development (www.child.tcu.edu). These DVDs contain the most complete library of Dr. Purvis' insight and material currently available, and are a great resource for any family, ministry or agency.

May God continue to bless your family as you faithfully follow Him!