

Small Group Study Guide

Parent. /'par-ent/n
Dwell on the ramifications of that word for a minute or two. No more important title in life than this one.

Guardian. Protector. Nurturer. So much more than the dictionary definition: "one that begets or brings forth offspring."¹

Interestingly, the dictionary lists parent as not only a noun, but also a verb. Train. Teach. Coach. Guide. Lead. What a great reminder that it isn't enough to be parents, we must learn how to parent.

The question isn't whether or not you're a parent. You are a parent. The question is whether or not you will *parent*.

Maybe you weren't parented well. Maybe you don't have time to parent. Maybe . . . you fill in the blank. I know you want to raise respectful children who grow up to be respectable adults. Not to stress. You don't have to do it alone. Let me encourage you to invite others to join you in a small group. We have provided a detailed study guide online that includes suggestions for leading a group, weekly lessons, and extra resources that reinforce the principles presented.

My hope is that this study guide will enable your small group to encourage each other, hold each other accountable, and find strength in numbers, as you make decisions about how you will raise your children.

This guide is designed for a seven-week study.

Chapter Grouping

<i><u>Session One</u></i>	Chapter 1: What Went Wrong?
<i><u>Session Two</u></i>	Chapter 2: Where Have All the Parents Gone? Chapter 3: Enroll in the School of Respect
<i><u>Session Three</u></i>	Chapter 4: Stress Purpose, Not Performance Chapter 5: Coach; Don't Cheerlead
<i><u>Session Four</u></i>	Chapter 6: Set Boundaries Without Building Walls Chapter 7: Use Discipline, Not Punishment
<i><u>Session Five</u></i>	Chapter 8: Shield Your Treasures from the Trash: Magazines, Books, and Music Chapter 9: Shield Your Treasures from the Trash: Movies, TV, Video Games, and the Internet
<i><u>Session Six</u></i>	Chapter 10: Engage; Don't Entertain Chapter 11: Teach Gratefulness, Not Greediness
<i><u>Session Seven</u></i>	Chapter 12: Listen to the Children

Session Divisions

SCRIPTURE: Foundation from God's Word

READING ASSIGNMENT: Chapters of the book covered in the lesson

LESSON OBJECTIVE: The take-away from the lesson

MATERIALS: Extra supplies, books, props, etc.

YESTERDAY: Reflection questions based on your childhood experiences. Recognizing how we were parented helps us to understand why we parent the way we do. We can discern constructive and destructive ways to parent our children.

TODAY: Activities and discussion questions centered on your present-day family's experiences

TOMORROW: Heartwork for the home to help reinforce good habits, create new habits, and change not-so-good habits

PRAYER: Prayer for the coming week

PARENT PAUSE: Lighthearted moment for reflection

Sample Session

Each group is unique and will have its own ideas and desires for the group. Here is a sample of how an hour-and-a-half meeting could be structured to make the most of your time together.

- ✦ 10 minutes: Meet and greet as folks are coming in. Snacks and drinks are wonderful, but not essential. This is an opportunity to get to know one another better.
- ✦ 5 minutes: Introductions. Allow all members to introduce themselves or, as the weeks continue, to welcome new guests. Remind participants that all discussions remain confidential among group members.
- ✦ 5 minutes: Opening prayer time.
- ✦ 15 minutes: Discuss the heartwork (from the TOMORROW section) from the previous week, offering each other suggestions and help from experience. Discuss the answers to YESTERDAY's questions to enable reflection on where parenting decisions come from in your present family.
- ✦ 45 minutes: Activities and discussion of TODAY's suggestions and questions. Challenge for TOMORROW's questions and suggestions.
- ✦ 10 minutes: Closing prayer time. E-mail prayer requests to the group the following day, so that members can pray for one another during the week. Close prayer time by reciting the prayer for the week in unison.

One last suggestion: if you missed the movie *Secretariat*, I encourage you to see it. AJ Michalka's theme song, "It's Who You Are," is a great summation of one of the goals of this study: to help you help your children discover who God created them to be. The words of this song put it all in perspective.

It can be found on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kShUvrr7QVU>.

Enjoy . . . Parents who have great kids usually have kids who have great parents. May each and every one of you become a great parent with great kids!

SMALL GROUP SESSION ONE

CHAPTER 1: What Went Wrong?

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control: against such there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vainglory [self-esteem], provoking one another and envying one another.

—Galatians 5: 22–26 (a combination of NIV and KJV)

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Choosing self-esteem or self-respect as your parenting goal

READING ASSIGNMENT: Preface, Introduction, and Chapter 1; Galatians 5:16–26

MATERIALS: Mirrors - one for each pair of participants. (8" x 10" mirrors are available at Dollar Tree)

YESTERDAY

Think back to your childhood . . .

- ◆ How has our society changed? Are we more respectful or more disrespectful? More selfish or less selfish?
 - ◆ What do you believe caused the changes?
-

TODAY

Ask your participants to sit in pairs facing each other. One person from each pair needs to hold a mirror in front of his/her face.

Ask the following questions:

Who do you see when you look in the mirror?

- ◆ My reflection
- ◆ I can see people behind me in the mirror.

Who do you not see when you look in the mirror?

- ◆ The person sitting across from me
- ◆ Anyone in front of me

In the mirror, you see only yourself and people behind you. You cannot see those in front of you. You see only where you have come from. You cannot see where you're going. In the mirror, you cannot see God, and you cannot see God looking at you.

But what if you put the mirror down and stood at a window?

Would you see yourself in the window?

- ✦ You would still see yourself, but a transparent image.
- ✦ You would see through yourself, past yourself.

What would you see?

- ✦ You would see others.
- ✦ You would see where you're going.
- ✦ You would see the possibilities of what could be.

When we raise our children in the mirror, they become lost in themselves.

They can be at either one extreme or the other . . . either selfconceited or self-conscious. Life becomes all about what the world will do for them.

When we raise children at the window, they can see others. They can see the possibilities before them. They can find their place in the world. Life becomes all about what they will do for the world. Our children follow where we lead . . . to the window or to the mirror.

Questions for discussion:

1. Are you living in the mirror or at the window?
 2. Are your children respectful? Why or why not?
 3. Are good manners important to you? For your children? Why or why not?
-

TOMORROW

Heartwork for Home

1. Are you living in the mirror or the window?
2. Which category best describes your current parenting style?
 - a. Befriending your kids
 - b. Letting your kids make their own decisions
 - c. Never refusing your children anything
 - d. Training your children's hearts
3. Are you trying to develop self-esteem or self-respect in your children?

4. Do you insist that your children use the following?
- “Yes, Ma’am” and “No, Sir”
 - “May I get your chair?”
 - “Excuse me.”
 - “I’m sorry.”
5. Are you praying regularly for wisdom to raise your children to be respectful?
If not, begin today.

PRAYER

Father,

Open the eyes of my heart to see Your truth.
Enable me to become the parent You need me to be
so that I can raise my children to become all You created them to be.
Through Your Son, Amen.

PARENT PAUSE

A teacher asked her students what each wanted to become when they grew up. A chorus of responses came from all over the room.

“A football player.” “A doctor.” “An astronaut.” “The president.” “A fireman.”
“A teacher.” “A race car driver.”

Everyone had an answer except Tommy. The teacher noticed that he was sitting quietly and still. So she said to him, “Tommy, what do you want to be when you grow up?”

“Possible,” Tommy replied.
“Possible?” asked the teacher.

“Yes,” Tommy said. “My mom is always telling me I’m impossible. So when I get to be big, I want to be possible.”²

SMALL GROUP SESSION TWO

CHAPTER 2: Where Have All the Parents Gone?
CHAPTER 3: Enroll in the School of Respect

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.
—Romans 5: 2–5

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Choosing the parenting style that enables your family to graduate from the School of Respect

READING ASSIGNMENT: Chapters 2 and 3; Romans 5:1–5

MATERIALS: Chart paper

YESTERDAY

Think back to your childhood . . .

- ◆ Were you raised by child-centered, parent-centered, or character-centered parents?
 - ◆ Were your soul questions answered?
-

TODAY

Discuss the heartwork from the past week.

Draw an outline of a heart on chart paper. Ask the question from page 31: Today, you have the opportunity to fill your child's empty heart. What will you place in that heart? Fill in the heart with the answers.

The answers that are given become the character traits we want to help our children cultivate.

Draw the School of Respect chart from page 38 and discuss ways to answer the soul questions of the children represented in your group.

Questions for discussion:

1. List the four most important aspects of character-centered parenting from pages 26–28. Discuss how well you are doing in each area.
 2. Using the list on page 29 as a challenge, admit an area of weakness and ask for accountability as you work to improve.
 3. Have you set family goals you can share with others?
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TOMORROW

Heartwork for Home

Chapter 2: Where Have All the Parents Gone?

1. Which category of parenting best describes you?
 - a. Parent-centered
 - b. Child-centered
 - c. Character-centered
2. Are your expectations for your children attainable?
3. What motivations are behind your dreams and aspirations for your children?
4. Do you sometimes find yourself pressuring your children to achieve a certain “success”?
5. Do you spend a lot of time and effort developing character in your children?
6. Have you made the firm decision that, no matter what, you will do your best to raise respectful children in this disrespectful world?
7. Are you optimistic, doubtful, or pessimistic about your decision? Why?
8. How does your list of priorities compare to the one on page 29?

Chapter 3: Enroll in the School of Respect

1. What is more valuable to you, your children’s character or their grades?
2. Are you working to answer your children’s soul questions in each stage of the School of Respect?
3. Do you sometimes brush your children off when they’re trying to get your attention, especially when you’re too busy? How do you think they interpret this?
4. Are duties around the house just something to do (an option), or are they necessary responsibilities for your children as members of the family?
5. If your children viewed God’s love through you, would it be unconditional, patient, always trusting, and slow to anger (1 Corinthians 13: 4–7)?
What did they see in you last week?
6. In the past, has your “no” meant an absolute “no,” “sometimes,” “maybe,” “it depends,” or even “yes”?
7. Are you giving your children opportunities to serve others?
8. Have you been attempting to demand respect from your children rather than commanding respect from them? Are you ready to change your ways if needed?

PRAYER

Father,

I pray that each of my children would grow
in wisdom and stature and favor with You and man.
Enable me to parent with eternity in mind so that I can satisfy
the answers to my children's soul questions, according to Your will.
Through Your Son, Amen

PARENT PAUSE

The man in the supermarket was pushing a cart that contained, among other things, a screaming baby. As the man proceeded along the aisles, he kept repeating softly,

“Keep calm, George. Don't get excited, George. Don't get excited, George.
Don't yell, George.”

A lady watching with admiration said to the man,

“You are certainly to be commended for your patience in trying to quiet little George.”

“Lady,” he declared, “I'm George.”

SMALL GROUP SESSION THREE

CHAPTER 4: Stress Purpose, Not Performance

CHAPTER 5: Coach; Don't Cheerlead

For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.

—Romans 8: 24–28

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Coaching to help your children find God's purpose for their lives.

READING ASSIGNMENT: Chapters 4 and 5; Romans 8:24–28

MATERIALS: Chart paper

YESTERDAY

Think back to your childhood . . .

- ◆ Were you parented or pushed to achieve?
- ◆ Did you receive false praise or genuine encouragement as a child?

TODAY

Discuss the heartwork from the past week.

Use the chart paper to list the warning signs of perfectionism, the differences between praise and encouragement, and three ways to build character in children.

Questions for discussion:

1. Using the section on perfectionism, discuss the damage of perfectionism and how to keep your children from becoming self-defeating perfectionists.
2. Praise and encouragement are two very different parenting techniques. Discuss the difference and which offers the greater opportunity for helping your children become all they are meant to be.
3. What are three ways you can help your children develop character, starting today?

TOMORROW

Heartwork for Home

Chapter 4: Stress Purpose, Not Performance

1. How do you deal with your child's loss in a competition?
2. Do the duties you assign your children teach them duty and responsibility?
3. Do you find it easier to give up or to stick things out?
4. Do you encourage your children to set goals?
5. Are you a perfectionist?
6. Do you push your children toward perfectionism?
7. Do you want your children to be number one or their best?
8. Do you set the following goals? In writing?
 - a. Family goals
 - b. Career goals
 - c. Financial goals
9. Do you pray together as a family? Do your children see you praying?
10. If you're concerned that your child is headed down the path to perfectionism, use the list on pages 73–74 to help you identify the signs. If you find yourself nodding in agreement with four or more of the indicators, make a commitment to help your child overcome this self-defeating trap by using the suggestions in the chapter as a start.

Chapter 5: Coach; Don't Cheerlead

1. Are you a parent who refuses to give up in spite of all odds?
2. Do you find yourself coaching—or cheering—your children?
3. Do you sometimes give false praise to your children, hoping they'll feel good about themselves?
4. Do you let your children know your expectations for them?
5. Do you tell your children the truth in love about their performances in sports or music or academics?
6. Do you offer guidance in your words and actions to help your children achieve their goals?
7. Do your priorities match Coach Landry's: God, family, football (or whatever the task at hand)?
8. If your children followed in your footsteps, would that lead them in the right direction?
9. Challenge yourself as a parent to be a coach, not a cheerleader, using the list on page 99 as a guide.

PRAYER

Father,

Guard my heart against perfectionism.
Give me words of genuine encouragement for my children.
Teach me how to be an effective coach so that I can help
my children develop character to live with purpose and hope.
In Your Son's name, Amen

PARENT PAUSE

There is nothing training cannot do. Nothing is above its reach.
It can turn bad morals to good;
it can destroy bad principles and recreate good ones;
it can lift men to angelship.
—Mark Twain

SMALL GROUP SESSION FOUR

CHAPTER 6: Set Boundaries Without Building Walls
CHAPTER 7: Use Discipline, Not Punishment

. . . this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastens everyone He accepts as His son.” Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

—Hebrews 12: 5–11

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Setting boundaries without building walls through effective discipline

READING ASSIGNMENT : Chapters 6 and 7; Hebrews 12: 5–11

MATERIALS :

- ◆ Index cards and tape or stick-it notes
- ◆ Chart paper

YESTERDAY

Think back to your childhood . . .

- ◆ Were the “house rules” in your home negotiable?
Did your parents “no” mean NO ?
- ◆ Were there walls between you and your parents?
Are there still walls today?
- ◆ Were you punished or disciplined?

TODAY

Discuss the heartwork from the past week.

On index cards or stick-it notes, have each participant write actions parents take that build walls between their children and themselves. Tape each one to the chart paper, stacking as you go to create a wall. Draw a child standing next to the wall.

On June 12, 1987, President Reagan challenged Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in a speech at the Brandenburg Gate near the Berlin Wall with the most famous words of his presidency. "Tear down this wall," he exhorted, as a symbol of Gorbachev's desire to increase freedom in the Eastern Bloc through glasnost (transparency).

Don't set your children up to demand that you "tear down this wall" by allowing your rules and attitude to build a wall between you. Children need your transparency. They need to know you're a fallible human being. They need to know you make mistakes. They need to know you're real. They need to know you see them and hear them. Boundaries build trust. Walls create resentment and rebellion, behind which an angry storm will brew.

On the same chart paper, make a chart of the differences between punishment and discipline. Give examples of each.

Questions for discussion:

1. Give examples of nonnegotiables.
2. List three ways to discipline from a heart of love.
3. Choose three points of preventive discipline from the lists on pages 128–136 to discuss.

TOMORROW

Heartwork for Home

Chapter 6: Set Boundaries Without Building Walls

1. Do you and your spouse always stand unified as a team?
2. Do your children clearly understand what is expected of them?
3. Do they obey without questioning or complaining?
4. Are you setting boundaries, not building walls?
5. Are you developing the necessary character traits in your children before they start elementary school?
6. Are you firmly instilling family values in your children that you hope will stay with them?
7. Are there "house rules" for your home that are nonnegotiable?
8. Do you spend focused time with your children?
9. Choose a way of staying emotionally connected to your children from the suggestions on pages 107–09. Make a commitment to add at least one connection for each child in the next month.

Chapter 7: Use Discipline, Not Punishment

1. When you discipline your children, are you careful to make certain the penalty fits the disobedience?
2. Do you discipline your children to punish them or to change a wrong behavior?
3. What is the motive behind your discipline?
 - a. Anger
 - b. Fear
 - c. Love
4. Are your current disciplinary techniques effective?
5. When contemplating discipline, what are you more concerned with?
 - a. Your child doing good
 - b. Your child feeling good
6. Do you often yell at your children to correct them?
7. Do you find yourself correcting your children for the same things you sometimes do?
8. When you make mistakes, do you admit you're wrong and ask your child for forgiveness?

PRAYER

Father,

Grant wisdom to know the boundaries my children need
to be protected and fortified.

Give me courage to use effective discipline
so that my children develop respect for

You, others, and themselves.

In Your Son's name, Amen

PARENT PAUSE

Novelist Pearl S. Buck told her sixteen-year-old daughter she wouldn't allow her to attend a party of mixed teenagers where there would be no adult supervision. The girl wailed,

"You don't trust me!"

Mrs. Buck's reply was, "Of course, I don't trust you. I couldn't trust myself at sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, or as much farther as you care to go!"

When you face the fact that you don't trust yourself in a situation, the only wisdom is to be careful not to put yourself into that situation.

—Homemade, May 1989

SMALL GROUP SESSION FIVE

CHAPTER 8: Shield Your Treasures from the Trash: Magazines, Books, and Music

CHAPTER 9: Shield Your Treasures from the Trash: Movies, TV, Video Games, and the Internet

Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. Blessed are those who keep His statutes and seek Him with all their heart—they do no wrong but follow His ways. You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees! Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands. I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws. I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me.

How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to Your word. I seek You with all my heart; do not let me stray from Your commands. I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You. Praise be to You, Lord; teach me Your decrees. With my lips I recount all the laws that come from Your mouth. I rejoice in following Your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on Your precepts and consider Your ways. I delight in Your decrees; I will not neglect Your word.

—Psalm 119:1–16

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Protecting your children from being infected by the world, while you work to affect the world for good

READING ASSIGNMENT : Chapters 8 and 9; Psalm 119

MATERIALS : Computer for showing the “good” sites that offer help in combating the media-gone-wild

YESTERDAY

Think back to your childhood . . .

- ◆ What was the greatest media threat to your innocence?
- ◆ What was the worst media influence in your teenage years? Did you see and hear things that were too mature for you?

TODAY

Discuss the heartwork from the past week.

Questions for discussion:

1. Discuss your children's role models. Are they who you want them to be?
2. Are you willing to change your media choices to help your children make wise decisions about their media choices?
3. What do you believe the author meant by "The Wireless Generation"?
4. What kinds of things do you do to help influence the culture for good? Can it impact your kids to see you doing these things?

Group Challenge:

Using the list below, choose at least three suggestions you will commit to following in the next forty days. You might just bring your family out of the wilderness and back to real living! Agree to hold one another accountable in your study group.

- ◆ Kids' bedrooms are screen-free zones.
- ◆ No television before school.
- ◆ All homework must be completed before using electronic media.
- ◆ Electronic media must not be used before the sun goes down.
- ◆ Screen time is between 6:30 and 8:30 p.m. only.
- ◆ No electronic media is to be used during meals (including phones and TV s).
- ◆ Electronic media must be shared and everyone must have equal amounts of time.
- ◆ If someone does not follow the rules, that person must do the dishes.
- ◆ Kids must have had an hour of activity before using electronics.

I'd like to offer four sources of help in combating the world of media:

- ◆ The Truth Project at www.truthproject.org. Outstanding training to combat the media lies in today's culture.
- ◆ Plugged In at www.pluggedin.com. Undisputedly, the best site for wise media discernment.
- ◆ Plugged-in Parenting: How to Raise Media-Savvy Kids with Love, Not War by Bob Waliszewski. Thorough, sensible help for handling media appropriately with your children.
- ◆ Please visit our website at www.mannersoftheheart.org to find "Plugged into Life"—a list of one hundred ideas for unplugging from electronics and plugging into the family.

TOMORROW

Heartwork for Home

Chapter 8: Shield Your Treasures from the Trash: Magazines, Books, and Music

1. Do you allow your young daughter to buy teen magazines?
2. Do you know what your teenage children think about the latest entertainment (songs, magazines, books) the world is offering them?
3. Have you become blind to the destructive garbage the media is offering your children? Have you allowed your children to be filled with it?

4. Do you know what type of music your children listen to? What type of books they read?
5. Are your choices of media helping your children make wise decisions about what they read and listen to?

Chapter 9: Shield Your Treasures from the Trash: Movies, TV, Video Games, and the Internet

1. Do you know how many hours a week your children watch television?
2. Are you lenient about what you allow your little ones to watch?
3. Do you preview the movies your children want to watch, even those rated PG 13? Do you allow your ten- to twelve-year-old to watch PG-13 movies?
4. Do you know what your children are watching at friends' houses? Which video games they're playing?
5. Do you have safeguards in place regarding your children's use of the Internet?
6. Do the shows your children watch have a positive or negative influence on them?
7. Do you sometimes watch the very things you prohibit your children from watching?

PRAYER

Father,

Protect my children from the onslaught of filth in our culture.

Give me the courage to stand against it.

Give me the boldness to speak up
and stand up for the good and the right,

regardless of the consequences in the short term.

I want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

In Your Son's name, Amen

PARENT PAUSE

I like Chuck Colson's job description for parents:

Parents take small, self-centered monsters, who spend much of their time screaming defiantly and hurling peas on the carpet, and teach them to share, to wait their turn, to respect others' property. These lessons translate into respect for others, self-restraint, obedience to law—in short, into the virtues of individual character that are vital to a society's survival.

SMALL GROUP SESSION SIX

CHAPTER 10: Engage; Don't Entertain
CHAPTER 11: Teach Gratefulness, Not Greediness

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.
—Colossians 3: 8–17

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Engaging children to fill their hearts with gratitude for all things, big and small

READING ASSIGNMENT: Chapters 10 and 11; Colossians 3

MATERIALS : Chart paper

YESTERDAY

Think back to your childhood . . .

- ✦ Did you grow up with a dad who was disengaged due to his work schedule?
- ✦ Was service to your community and giving back part of your upbringing?

TODAY

Discuss the heartwork from the past week.

Using chart paper, list twenty-five big and small ways you and your children can serve others. Have each participant choose one or two opportunities for his or her family to consider

Questions for discussion:

1. If you woke up one morning to realize thirty years had passed and your children were all grown up, would you regret not having done certain things with or for your children?
2. Have you been guilty of giving too much and expecting too little? Share with the group and brainstorm ways to undo the damage.

3. Share some memorable giving moments you have had with your children. What kind of activities did they involve?

Group challenge:

Look for an opportunity to serve your community as a group, such as:

- ◆ Habitat for Humanity Build
- ◆ Food bank
- ◆ Soup kitchen
- ◆ Nursing home
- ◆ Delivering treats to neighbors, just because
- ◆ Volunteering in public school

Chapter 10: Engage; Don't Entertain

1. Do you help your children exercise their imaginations? Do you often use your imagination?
2. How often do you play board games or have picnics with your family?
3. Do you have dedicated time for reading to your children?
4. Can you think of some things that you've been meaning to do with your children but have been putting off because you "haven't had any time"?
5. Can you think of the most memorable moments that you've shared with your children?
6. How often do you sit and listen to your children to find out what's in their hearts?
7. Will you give your children something other than an electronic device on their next birthday?

Chapter 11: Teach Gratefulness, Not Greediness

1. How is your heart?
 - ◆ Full or empty
 - ◆ Hurting or happy
 - ◆ Anxious or calm
 - ◆ Disturbed or peaceful
 - ◆ Grateful or greedy
2. Does advertising—someone else telling us what we need—have a big influence on what you consider to be your "needs"?
3. Do you find yourself giving your children things rather than spending time with them?
4. Are you more concerned with your children's comfort or their character?
5. Do you often intentionally give opportunities to develop gratitude in your children?
6. Which philosophy do your actions teach and exhibit to your children?
 - ◆ Being served
 - ◆ Serving others
7. When teaching your children manners, do you emphasize the reason behind having manners? Or do you just demand them to be nice?
8. How are your children's hearts?
 - ◆ Grateful
 - ◆ Greedy

PRAYER

Father,

Do not allow me to replace entertainment for engagement.
Bring to the top of my mind ways to engage with my children
every day. Teach me how to model gratefulness
and help my children experience the joy of giving.
In Your Son's name, Amen

PARENT PAUSE

Charles Francis Adams, a nineteenth-century political figure and diplomat, kept a diary. One day he entered:

“Went fishing with my son today—a day wasted.”

His son, Brook Adams, also kept a diary, which is still in existence. On that same day, Brook Adams made this entry:

“Went fishing with my father—the most wonderful day of my life!”

The father thought he was wasting his time while fishing with his son, but his son saw it as an investment of time. The only way to tell the difference between wasting and investing is to know one's ultimate purpose in life and to judge accordingly.

—Silas Shotwell, *Homemade*, September 1987

SMALL GROUP SESSION SEVEN

CHAPTER 12: Listen to the Children

These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

—Deuteronomy 6:1–9

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Raising respectful children who grow up to become respectable adults who love the Lord with all their hearts, with all their souls, and with all their strength, and transform this disrespectful world in His name.

READING ASSIGNMENT : Chapter 12 and Final Word; Deuteronomy 6

MATERIALS : Index cards

YESTERDAY

Think back to your childhood . . .

- ◆ Did your parents listen to you?
- ◆ Did you have the kind of childhood you would like to give your children? Did you have the kind of childhood you would like to shield your children from? Either way, it's up to you today!

TODAY

Discuss the heartwork from the past week.

Questions for discussion:

1. What have you learned through this study that will change the way you parent?
2. Using the index cards, write down the changes you would like to make in your family. Keep the cards in a private place and check them as you go through the next several months as reminders of the promises you made to yourself and to God.
3. Commit to memorizing “The Family Protection Prayer” found in Appendix B of the book, as you form the habit of praying it every morning. Nothing you can do will be more important than covering yourself in the armor of God and holding the shield of faith for your children until they are ready to carry it in their own faith.

Group challenge:

Commit to continue praying for one another. How wonderful it would be to keep the group going once a month as a support group! There is strength in numbers when making parenting decisions that run countercultural. To know there is a group of parents who are praying “The Family Protection Prayer” every morning is enough to make you walk through your day with the boldness of conviction. To know you’re not the only one who will not allow your twelve-year-old to attend a PG-13 movie gives you the courage to stand by your decision. To know you’re not the only one who is willing to unplug on Saturdays begins to build a community that chooses to do things differently.

TOMORROW

Let me challenge you to ask your children the twenty questions found on pages 227–28. You might be surprised by their answers. Your children came into the world needing guidance to become all they were created to be. They need direction. They need examples to follow. They need someone to nurture their souls and protect their hearts. They need you to be their parent and to parent.

You might be accused, like Noah, of being crazy in meticulously planning every detail to survive the flood no one else seems to understand is coming. Take heart from Noah’s story—his family survived the flood and thrived after it!

Rest assured, I will be praying for you as you lead your family to safety.

PRAYER

Father,

I acknowledge that I cannot parent my children
without Your wisdom and Your guidance.
My deepest heart’s desire is for my children
to one day call You Father.
In Your Son’s name, Amen

PARENT PAUSE

Heartwork Prayer

I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen (your child's name) with power through His Spirit in (your child's name)'s inner being, so that Christ may dwell in (your child's name)'s heart through faith. And I pray that (your child's name), being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that (your child's name) may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

—Ephesians 3: 16–19