Welcome to *It Starts At Home*. Your download includes leader’s guide notes and group handouts for all six sessions, information on how to use the leader’s guide, and several other resources that will help you take this content to your entire church. Here’s an outline of all the materials included:

### How to Use Folder
- Introductory Letter
- *It Starts At Home* article by Kurt Bruner
- How to Use the Leader’s Guide
- *It Starts At Home* Overview
- Expert Bios
- Trader Information
- Taking *It Starts At Home* Church-wide

### Leader’s Guide Folder
- Session 1 Leader’s Guide
- Session 2 Leader’s Guide
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### Group Handouts Folder
- Session 1 Group Handout
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### Taking *It Starts At Home* Church-wide Folder
- *It Starts at Home* Flyer
- *It Starts at Home* Bulletin Insert
- *It Starts at Home* Logo
- *It Starts at Home* Poster
- Expert Headshots

### One Click Printing Folder
- Full Leader’s Guide
- Full Handouts
Session 1
Faith: It Starts at Home

QUICK START

► **Read:** Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible Study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

► **Print:** Before class, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. (The handouts came with your download or are at [www.ItStartsAtHome.org](http://www.ItStartsAtHome.org).)

► **Watch:** Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level. Don’t forget to pass out the handouts and encourage your group to take notes.

► **Encourage:** Encourage your class to go to [www.ItStartsAtHome.org](http://www.ItStartsAtHome.org), download the Family Night Activity sheets, and try one with their family before you meet again.

**Note:** For more detailed information, please see the How to Use This Leader’s Guide document included in your download.
ICEBREAKER

Is there any “family tradition” that you learned from the family you grew up in that you now practice with your own children? Tell us about it.

Did any of these traditions come from the previous generation—your grandparents?

Have you and your spouse brought different customs from the families you grew up in? What do you do about that?

We’re beginning a series about parenting, and we’ve already been talking about some of the habits and values we pass down to our kids. In this first session, we’re focusing on the ways we pass on a legacy of faith in Christ. Let’s watch.

Leader: Make sure you’ve passed out the handouts. Encourage your group to take notes during the video.

VIDEO

Play Session 1: Faith: It Starts at Home (XX minutes)
We saw a few different interviews and stories. Did any of them especially grab you? Which ones? Why?

We heard a lot about this idea of a “legacy” of faith. What’s your experience? Did you grow up in a Christian home that passed on a legacy of genuine faith to you—or is your journey a little different?

Do you think growing up in a Christian home makes it easier or harder for parents to create a Christian environment for their kids?

**Leader:** This might not be as easy to answer as it first appears. Don’t be afraid to provoke some extra discussion here. Some “Christian homes” are really just “church-going homes,” which might observe some Christian traditions but lack the vibrancy of life-changing faith. Sometimes parents who come to Christ later in life can create more authentic Christian homes.

Here was an exchange we heard in the video between Kurt and Olivia Bruner.

**KURT:** “… no matter how bad the legacy you received might have been, you can give better than you received.”

**OLIVIA:** “Another bit of good news. No matter how hard your present situation, perhaps you’re a single parent or dealing with the stress of a blended family dynamic, you can have a big impact on the faith of your child . . .”

How do you feel about these comments? Do they give you new hope? Or does it sound too good to be true?

You might remember a poignant moment in the opening story, as Matt Chandler was dealing with brain cancer. Here’s what he said:
...the thing that would gnaw on me for the longest time was the thought that my kids would become embittered towards the Lord, towards what I treasure more than anything else in the universe. Really it was a weight that almost crushed me. But even in that, the Lord began to be sweet, began to remind me, “Hey, I love your kids more than you do, so let me ask you a question, Matt: Is their salvation and their health depending on you or is it depending on Me? Because I think you’re giving yourself a little too much credit.”

How do you feel about that? Does that ease any pressure off of you in the parenting process?

Later, Matt talked about the possibility of establishing “an atmosphere of grace and forgiveness” in the home. What did he mean by that? How can we do that?

Matt said this after going through a lot of biblical theology. His point was that this atmosphere happens pretty naturally when we let the truth of the gospel fill our lives. That truth is that God loves us, even though we have sinned against him. He has found a way to forgive us by sending Jesus to die for us. As a result, we don’t have to keep trying to be good in order to earn God’s approval. We just receive his love for us, as shown in the sacrifice of Jesus. We respond to his love by loving him back, committing our lives to him. It’s not that our behavior doesn’t matter; it does—but not as a way to score points with God, it’s an outpouring of our love back to him. Matt called it a “disciplined delight.” And when we fully understand that, it sets a tone for our marriages and our families, a tone of grace and forgiveness. We recognize that our children will make bad choices sometimes, but that doesn’t keep us from loving them. They learn to make better choices not in order to be loved, but because they are loved.

BIBLE JOURNEY

Let’s take a look at one of the Bible passages Matt referred to. Please turn to Deuteronomy 6. Would someone read verses 1–3?

According to verse 1, when are these commands being given? What clues do we have there about the “current” situation?

These laws are to be observed “in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess.” There is a future slant to this. They are about to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land. This is the kind of life they need to live there.
According to verse 2, who are these commands for? (“You, your children, and their children after them.” There is clearly a legacy being passed on through the generations.)

What do we see in verses 2–3 about the results of living God’s way? What will happen to those who obey? (They might “enjoy long life.” It might “go well with” them. They might “increase greatly.”)

We have a tendency to look for guarantees: *If you are righteous, God will make you rich.* Of course that’s not true, at least not in a material sense. But the Bible regularly gives us this principle, that God’s way gives us a better kind of life, and that’s what we find here. The “increase” here probably refers to growing families. As God’s ways are passed down through the generations, they become part of the spiritual DNA of a growing clan of people.

Would somebody read Deuteronomy 6:4–5?

**Why was it so important for Israel to hear that there is only one God?**

The nations surrounding the ancient Israelites worshiped many different gods. The LORD (in Hebrew, Yahweh) was not just another deity, but the one God over all. Aren’t you glad that people today don’t devote themselves to many different gods? Oh, wait, they do.

**Without even considering the deities of other religions, what are people in our culture worshiping?** (Football? Money? Beauty? The latest computerized gadget?)

**Let’s think about the culture your children live in. What do their friends and classmates worship?** (Popularity? Sex? Fashion? Sports?)

**According to verse 5, how are we to love the Lord? And how can we do this in today’s world?**

Essentially, we are to love this one God totally, “with all we’ve got,” heart and soul and body. He becomes what’s most important to us. We care about pleasing him more than we care about anything else.
Verses 4–5 are still seen as a kind of centerpiece of the Hebrew Scriptures. Jewish children memorize these verses. In a way, this is the summing up of God’s laws. This is the way Jesus saw it, too. When he was asked to name the greatest commandment, he went right to Deuteronomy 6:5.

**Why do you think this summation of the law is about Love, rather than, say, Holiness?**

It’s true that there are many commands about personal holiness—how to be clean and true and loyal and righteous. But God knows that it’s possible to do the right things for the wrong reasons. We could conceivably do many “holy” things without truly loving God. But if we love him with our entire selves, then we choose to do the “holy” things that please him.

Would someone read verses 6–9?

**According to these verses, where should God’s commandments be?**

Pretty much everywhere, right? In your home, on your hands, in your heart, on your tongue.

The references to home and children are especially important to us. How would you apply these verses to today? How can you make God’s way part of your home life? How can you make loving God a total commitment for your family?

**Leader:** After some ideas are exchanged . . .

That is something we’ll be exploring more throughout these sessions. But remember: it’s not just that we want to raise “good kids”—though we certainly do—but we want to let the love of the Lord completely fill our households. We want it to overflow from our hearts to theirs.

**Leader:** For these sessions, we’ll include a “Group Think” segment at the end, in which parents can talk together about their child-rearing strategies in groups no larger than 4 to 7. Do your best to provide private “corners” throughout the room for these conversations.
Take a look at the “Spiritual Legacy Evaluation” on page 2 of your handout (in Leader’s Guide, page 8). Go through the questions first on your own, answering them about the family you grew up in. Put the letter G—for “Growing up”—next to the appropriate answer. Now, go back through the questions and put the letter N—for “Now”—next to the way you would answer for your family today. When you have finished, share your answers with your group.

Any surprises here? Did you learn anything new about your spouse? Or about yourself?

As you consider your “Now” answers, think about the things you’d like to change, and how you might change them. Hopefully, we’ll be answering some of those questions in future sessions. You can find additional legacy evaluations, including your emotional and social legacy, at www.heritagebuilders.com/Resources.

Before you go, remember that as we build a legacy of faith in our families, it’s important that we take action and are intentional about having faith conversations in the home. You’ll find instructions for the Family Night Activity suggested in the video and others on ItStartsAtHome.org (we’ve included an example for you to show your group on page 9). Try an activity this week, and come prepared next time to discuss how it went.
Spiritual Legacy Evaluation  (Adapted from Your Heritage, by J. Otis Ledbetter and Kurt Brunner)

Go through these questions first on your own, answering them about the family you grew up in. Put the letter G—for “Growing up”—next to the appropriate answer. Now, go back through the questions and put the letter N—for “Now”—next to the way you would answer for your family today.

To what degree were spiritual principles incorporated into daily family life?

☐ Never
☐ Rarely
☐ Sometimes
☐ Frequently
☐ Almost always
☐ Consistently

Which word best captures the tone of how you learned to view/relate to God?

☐ Absent
☐ Adversarial
☐ Fearful
☐ Casual
☐ Solemn
☐ Intimate

How would you summarize your family’s level of participation in spiritual activities?

☐ Nonexistent
☐ Rare
☐ Occasional
☐ Regimental
☐ Active
☐ Enthusiastic

How were spiritual discussions applied in your home?

☐ They weren’t
☐ To control
☐ To manipulate
☐ To teach
☐ To influence
☐ To reinforce

What was the perspective in your home with regard to moral absolutes?

☐ If it feels good, do it!
☐ There are no absolutes
☐ Let your heart guide you
☐ Legalistic rules
☐ Conservative values
☐ Clear life boundaries

*Additional Legacy Evaluations can be found at www.heritagebuilders.com/resources.
Upstairs/Downstairs* (filmed exercise for It Starts at Home Session 1)

**Main Point:** Helps children understand that God did for us what we could not do for ourselves (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8–9).

**Preparation:** Schedule an evening to take the family out for ice cream or some other favorite dessert. If you live in a one-story home, you’ll need to change locations for this activity, since you need a staircase. Bring your Bible with you to the dessert place.

**Suggested Age:** Preschool/Elementary

**Estimated Time:** 15 minutes (before dessert)

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**Step One: Build Anticipation**

Tell the children that you want to take them out for ice cream or some other dessert. Ask each, “Are you willing to accept a challenge to earn the right to go?”

**Step Two: Pose the Challenge**

Go the to top of your staircase and explain the following to the children waiting below…

- **Share the Goal:** “I want you to pretend that I am God in heaven. I want you up here with me very much. Let’s figure out how to make that happen.”
- **Explain the Rules:** “You need to do your best to get up here to where I am. But no part of you (including your clothes) can touch the stairs or the railing. You have five minutes to figure it out. Now go!”
- **Wait & Watch:** Silently wait as the children try to think through a solution. They will likely try to “cheat” in one way or another. Clarify that there is only one acceptable solution.
- **Give Hints:** As time runs down, mom or dad should give hints so that at least one child figures out the solution: “God” can come down the stairs and carry you up the stairs on his back!

**Step Three: Discuss the Meaning**

Once each child has been carried upstairs, load everyone into the car and head out for dessert. While eating, explain that Jesus Christ is God who came down from heaven to do for us what we could not do for ourselves.

**Step Four: Discuss and Pray**

Read Romans 6:23 and Ephesians 2:8–9 together aloud and explain that we all sin and that no one can do enough good to get to heaven. But God wants us with Him so much that He came “downstairs” to do for us what we can’t do for ourselves!

End your time together having each child say a brief prayer of thanks to God for the free gift of salvation.

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For more family night activities and parenting tools please visit ItStartsAtHome.org
Outline

*Icebreaker* – Family Traditions

**Video Session 1:** *Faith: It Starts at Home* (XX minutes)

**Talk About It**

**Bible Journey**

► Deuteronomy 6:1–3

► Deuteronomy 6:4–5

► Deuteronomy 6:6–9

**Group Think**

► Spiritual Legacy Evaluation

► Family Night Activity (more at ItStartsAtHome.org)

► Reminder – Come prepared to talk about how your family night activity went!
Session 2
Marriage: Your Children Are Watching!

QUICK START

► **Read:** Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible Study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

► **Print:** Before class, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. (The handouts came with your download or are at [www.ItStartsAtHome.org](http://www.ItStartsAtHome.org)).

► **Watch:** Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level. Don’t forget to pass out the handouts and encourage your group to take notes.

► **Encourage:** Encourage your class to go to [www.ItStartsAtHome.org](http://www.ItStartsAtHome.org), download the Family Night Activity sheets, and try one with their family before you meet again.

*Note:* For more detailed information, please see the How to Use This Leader’s Guide document included in your download.
Leader: This session is about marriage. If you have single parents in your group, they may be able to draw some inspiration as they teach the biblical ideal for marriage to their children, but the lesson itself focuses on marriage. You might want to express that up front.

Before we start, did anyone try one of the Family Night Activities since we last met? Which activity did you do with your family last week? How did your kids respond?

Did you learn anything new about your kids, or yourself, as a result of that activity?

ICEBREAKER

Is there a company you like doing business with? Why?

Do you like this company mostly because of their advertising, their product, or the people that work there?

We live in an age of advertising. We are bombarded with sales messages all day, every day. And sometimes advertising works; it gets us to try out a new product or service. But what keeps us coming back? It’s the quality of what they offer, and the people we deal with.

Have you ever known a company where everybody (or nearly everybody) was pleasant to work with, where they had a collective spirit of respect and helpfulness? What causes that?

Well, chances are, it’s not some one-time program—some seminar that the management sets up—“We’re going to be a ‘Friendly Company’ now!” It probably goes deeper than that, to core values modeled by the leadership and encouraged throughout the ranks.

A family is far more than a company, but some of the same principles apply. You can “advertise” to your kids—“Hey, I’m a cool parent! Look at all the fun we’re having!” But your children see you 24/7. They see the everyday reality. Good Christian parenting is not something you “put on” after going to a seminar (or even taking a class like this); it comes down to core values. Your kids need to see the authentic reality of Christ in your life.

That’s what today’s video and lesson are all about.
Leader: Make sure you’ve passed out the handouts. Encourage your group to take notes during the video.

VIDEO

Play Session 2: *Marriage: Your Children Are Watching!* (XX minutes)

TALK ABOUT IT

Early in the video we met Brandon and Heather, who described some of the problems they were having. He was way too busy at church. She was tired of caring for their daughter by herself. Both of them were at the end of their rope. Here’s some of what they said:

Brandon: *I just wanted to walk off and do my own thing and not having someone to always be catering too or answering too.*

Heather: *I would just tell him that I’m done with this. I’m done with this marriage.*

At one point, when he was feeling overwhelmed, Brandon said, “*Marriage should not be this hard.*” Maybe you know other couples that have reached that point—who feel like marriage should not be such hard work. Maybe you’ve been there yourself.

What do you say to a couple like that? How can you help them?

Brandon and Heather were concerned about their daughter seeing them fight. Should you try to hide your arguments from the kids? Is there any advantage to the kids seeing how you handle conflict in your relationship?
Brandon had an interesting phrase: “We had to hit reset in our lives.”

How do you do that? What does it take to “hit reset,” to start fresh, with newer, healthier patterns?

Gary Thomas made a rather surprising statement. Talking about marriage and having children, he said, “Most often we pursue both for very selfish reasons.”

Do you think it’s true?

Later he said, “We need a biblical picture of why we stay involved as parents and why we keep our marriages together and why… single parents go through the sacrifices it takes to raise kids without the support of the spouse.” What sort of “biblical picture” was he talking about?

After tracing the fact that the Bible is full of dysfunctional families, Gary grabbed the promise in Malachi 4:6—that the coming of the Messiah would “turn the hearts of the fathers toward their children and the hearts of the children toward their fathers.” Family togetherness, he said, can be a living-out of the gospel of grace.

“One of the marks of the Messiah is the reunification of the family, the reengagement of families a different level of family life and family commitment. . . . We’re able to be committed . . . because we’re not just humans out of fear trying to rule with iron-will discipline to obey. It’s about God sending his Spirit who lives through us, empowering us to be engaged as husband and wife, to be engaged as mother and father, and to be engaged as a child to give due respect to their parents—which means that having a family . . . is not about us, it’s not about our own happiness, it’s not about feeling proud in what our kids become. It’s literally about presenting a picture of the gospel to a disbelieving world. . . . We are little pictures of the gospel to the world.”

How do you feel about that? Does it make sense to you? Does it take pressure off you or pile it on?

How do single parents display this “biblical picture” of grace? What challenges do single parents face that couples don’t? How can your group and your church get involved with your single parents in painting this biblical picture of grace?

Leader: It’s important that single parents don’t feel as though they are second-class parents because of their situation. This is an opportunity for the couples in your group to try and understand the unique challenges of single parenting, and for them to come up with some creative ways that they can help.
Remember what Olivia said: “Whether you are presently married or not, your children need to understand God’s design for marriage. I grew up in a single parent home myself. So I know how important it is for kids to understand God’s intended plan. It gives them a vision for their own future.”

What implications does marriage being a “biblical picture” of grace have for the mother or father who’s just not feeling “fulfilled” by family life anymore?

**BIBLE JOURNEY**

Turn to Ephesians 5:21. You may be familiar with this passage. Some people are afraid of it, but maybe we can shed new light on it today. Would somebody read verse 21?

**Who are we supposed to submit to, and why?** (One another, because we want to honor Christ.)

**What does it mean to “submit”?**

There are many ways to describe it, but we all know the meaning. It’s putting someone else first, treating their concerns as more important than your own, doing what’s best for them instead of what’s best for you.

**Greek Peek:** The word for submit in Ephesians 5:21 is hypotasso—literally “to arrange or place underneath.” The implication is that someone places himself or herself in second place, underneath someone else in importance or authority. In Luke 2:51 we find Jesus as a child submitting to his parents. Romans 13:1 tells us to submit to the government. In 1 Peter 5:5, younger believers are asked to submit to older ones. The same Greek word is used.

**What does submitting to one another have to do with our reverence for Christ? How is Christ honored when we do that?**
Remember that Jesus said an identifying characteristic of Christians would be the way they love one another (John 13:33). In Philippians 2, Paul describes the servanthood of Christ, and then remarks how a lack of bickering and complaining would make Christians “shine like stars” in a “warped and crooked generation.” Submission is counter-intuitive in our world. “Me first” is the going philosophy. When Christians put others first, in the church and in their homes, it demonstrates their connection to Jesus, who came to earth “not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

Verse 21 is sort of a title, or at least a “theme sentence” of the section the follows, continuing to at least Ephesians 6:9. Specific instructions are given to each member of what would have been a typical household in the Roman Empire of that time—wives and husbands, children and fathers, slaves and masters. You might say that Paul is teaching each group of people how to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

And notice how he keeps coming back to that theme. No matter what situation you’re in—as a master, slave, whatever—you’re behavior is not about your earthly status, it’s about Christ. Let’s take a quick look at this text, but let’s go backwards.

**Leader:** Single parents also need to demonstrate “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” If you have single parents in your group, consider asking how they can demonstrate this quality to their kids. Whom should they submit to?

Look at Ephesians 6:5–9. How are slaves supposed to behave toward their masters, and why?

How are masters supposed to behave toward slaves?

Is this telling us that slavery is okay?

No, of course not. Slavery was a deeply rooted system in the ancient world. Paul probably couldn’t imagine a world without it. What this passage tells us is: **Whatever** your situation—even as a slave—behave in a way that honors Christ. **Even if you’re a slave master,** recognize that Christ is your master and honor him with your life.

Take a look at Ephesians 6:1–4. How does “the Lord” figure into these instructions?

Children are to obey their parents “in the Lord.” Fathers are to bring up their children in the instruction “of the Lord.” Jesus is definitely a player here. The training parents offer is an extension of the training they receive from the Lord, and children can generally obey the Lord in the process of obeying their parents.
Since this verse is so important to us as parents, would someone read verse 4 out loud?

**Why do you think it’s addressed only to fathers?**

It’s possible, though not common, that this is intended as a generic word for “parents.” More likely, it’s because fathers were routinely responsible for the discipline of children. And maybe fathers were more likely than mothers to “exasperate” their children.

**Greek Peek:** The word for “exasperate” is a violent word, an emotional twisting. One translation puts it nicely: “Don’t squeeze the hope out of your children.” The Greek word translated “bring them up” is the same word used in 5:29 for the “care” of one’s own body. So it’s not just rigid discipline; a fuller translation might be “care for the development of.”

**How can this “non-exasperating,” “caring for their development” kind of child-rearing result in honor for Christ? In terms we heard earlier from Gary Thomas, how does it demonstrate the gospel?**

There are many possible answers here, but generally they’ll come down to love and grace. Love and grace always ultimately come from God and they testify to the love and grace God shows us.

Now we have worked our way back to the end of chapter 5. This is the section on husbands and wives. How can partners in a marriage “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”? Here’s where we find out.

Somebody read Ephesians 5:22–24.

**What does Christ have to do with how wives treat their husbands?** (They should put their husbands first in the same way they put Christ first. You might say they serve Christ as they serve their husbands.)

Obviously there are many in our world today who have trouble with these verses, but let’s make sure we get the whole context. If your life is all about grabbing for power, then these verses will be tough to accept—whether you are a woman or a man. The Christian way is submission. We are to put others first—whatever gender we are, whatever gender they are. This sense of service is seen in the home—as everyone in the home, those with power and those without, submit to one another because of Christ.
So let’s see the other side of these instructions. Someone read verses 25–27.

What does Christ have to do with the way husbands treat their wives? (They are to love their wives as Christ loved the church.)

How has Christ loved the church? (He gave himself up for the church.)

The following verses get a bit deep. Paul is painting a picture of unity. Whatever else is meant by “head” and “body”—and scholars disagree about this—Paul now emphasizes that the head and body are connected. The head is part of the body but distinct from it. In the same way, Christ is connected to the church—which is called the “body of Christ”—even though he is distinct from it. And in this same way a husband is connected to his wife, even though he is a separate person. Paul quotes the old saying from the story of Adam and Eve: “The two become one.”

This is the “mystery” Paul is talking about. How can two be one? That’s what happens in a marriage—and then he interrupts himself to say that the same thing happens with Christ and the church.

In the video, Gary Thomas was talking about Christian marriages when he said, “We are little pictures of the gospel to the world.” Based on our Bible study today, what else can you say about that? How do we “depict” the gospel in our marriages?

The last verses of Ephesians 5 would indicate that it’s not just love and grace that telegraph gospel truth, but the oneness of marriage. Christian husbands and wives “find themselves” by loving and serving each other. In the same way, we humans can truly find ourselves by losing ourselves in the love of God.

GROUP THINK

I hope you’ve grabbed onto this idea that your family life, starting with your marriage, is a testimony to others about Christ. Your love is a picture of God’s love. Your oneness is a picture of the oneness we can have with God.

So often we think of our “testimony” as if it’s advertising. “We need to get the message out there!” But today we’re saying that we are the message. We aren’t just marketing a product, we’re living it.
In our group time today, we’re going to focus on some ways to enhance the “oneness” in your marriage, so that message can be lived out more effectively.

**Leader:** The following exercise is intended to highlight the importance of maintaining a healthy marriage in the midst of parenting. Challenge single parents to think over the questions in regards to the health of their spiritual relationship with God. How much time do they spend cultivating that relationship? Are they guarding themselves from temptation? Are they taking care of themselves?

In your handout, turn to the “Intentional Marriage Checklist” on page 2 (in Leader’s Guide, page 10). Before you talk with the group, go through the list on your own, checking off whatever is appropriate. Husbands and wives should do this individually at first.

**Leader:** After 3–4 minutes, when everyone has done the Intentional Marriage Checklist on their own, break into small groups of 4–7.

Now’s the time to talk with your group. I’m asking each person to share one thing from the checklist with your group, something you feel comfortable sharing. Maybe you can share a story about something you’ve done right—or wrong. Maybe you want to identify a cutting-edge area in your marriage, something that you want to commit to doing better. Or maybe you’ve taken some good steps already, and you want to share the results. Try to find one thing to share, but if you don’t feel comfortable with that, you can opt out.

**After 8–10 more minutes, or when everyone’s finished . . .**

I hope these lessons can be a starting point for further discussions with your spouse. Maybe you can find a time later to go through that checklist together.

Before you go, remember the family night activity suggested in the video. You’ll find instructions for that Family Night Activity and others on ItStartsAtHome.org (we’ve included an example for you to show your group on page 11). Try an activity this week, and come prepared next time to discuss how it went.
Intentional Marriage Checklist  Adapted from *It Starts at Home*, by Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope (p. 58)

**In the last two months, have you . . .**

☐ had any “date nights” with your spouse to focus only on one another.

About how many? _____

*NOTE: Experts recommend at least two per month.*

☐ offered some tangible expression of love to your spouse—a love note, flowers, a special chore, a gift (not for birthday, Christmas, anniversary, or Mother’s/Father’s Day)

About how many times? _____

*NOTE: Experts recommend at least two per month.*

☐ called during the workday, sat down to chat, taken walks together, or pursued some other kind of focused, non-task-driven communication with your spouse.

About how many times? _____

*NOTE: Experts recommend at least three times per week.*

☐ prayed with your spouse (other than grace over meals)

About how many times? _____

**Grade yourself in the following areas . . .**

I regularly show love to my spouse with affirming words and meaningful touch.

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Need to be much better

I observe healthy boundaries and accountability to resist temptation (sex, time, bitterness, addictions) that would hurt my marriage.

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Need to be much better

I make a consistent effort to take care of myself physically and emotionally to be the best lifelong partner I can be.

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Need to be much better

I try to apologize and/or offer forgiveness when necessary before we go to bed.

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Need to be much better

Something specific I’d like to do in the next week to improve on one of these areas.

__________________________________________________________________
One Team  
(Video exercise for It Starts at Home Session 2)

Main Point: God designed marriage to be the union of one man and one woman who work together as one team under His guidance for life (Genesis 2:20–24). Marriage requires mutual sacrifice, teamwork and compromise.

Preparation: You'll need some twine, sandwich ingredients (bread, peanut butter and jelly), a beverage, cup and Bible. Lay out ingredients to make a sandwich on the kitchen counter. Make sure that you place one of the key ingredients where the kids can see it but can't reach it.

Suggested Age: Elementary/Pre-teen

Estimated Time: 20 minutes

Note: For this activity, you'll need at least two children. If you are the parent of an only child, see if one of their friend's families can join you for this lesson.

Step One:

Tell your kids, "Today we will learn about how God designed marriage and how a healthy marriage works." Take two children and the twine far away from the kitchen as possible. Have the two children stand side-by-side, with their "inner" arms around each other. Then tie their "inner" legs together. Remind them that they are not allowed to use their "inner" arms at any time during the activity.

Step Two:

Now that they are tied together, their first task is to race to the kitchen. Then they are to make a sandwich and pour the beverage. Remind them that they can only use the 'outside' arm. Next they are to cut the sandwich in half and feed it to the other person along with an occasional drink.

Note: Once they get to the kitchen, they'll have to figure out how to get the out-of-reach item. You'll want to encourage them to ask for your help to reach it.

Step Three:

When they are done, consider asking them these questions: What was it like being tied together? Was it easy to decide how to do things, like open the jelly jar or hold the cup without spilling on the other person? Could they do everything on their own?

Read Genesis 2:20–24 and explain to your children that marriage is an incredible adventure that God intended for one man and one woman. When you get married, you no longer act alone, but are part of a team. But even as a team, you need help and guidance from God—like when you had to ask for help getting the peanut butter down. Just like you had to communicate to successfully accomplish today's activity, husbands and wives have to communicate in order to create a successful marriage. Part of this unique relationship involves taking care of the other person and thinking about their needs above your own.

For more family night activities and parenting tools please visit ItStartsAtHome.org
Outline

*Family Night Activities Recap*

*Icebreaker* – “Friendly Company”

*Video Session 2: Marriage: Your Children Are Watching!* (XX minutes)

*Talk About It*

*Bible Journey*

- Ephesians 5:21
- Ephesians 6:5–9
- Ephesians 6:1–4
- Ephesians 5:22–24
- Ephesians 5:25–27

*Group Think*

- Intentional Marriage Checklist
- Family Night Activity (more at *ItStartsAtHome.org*)
  - *Reminder* – Come prepared to talk about how your family night activity went!
Session 3
Relationships: Your First Priority

QUICK START

► **Read:** Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible Study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

► **Print:** Before class, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. (The handouts came with your download or are at [www.ItStartsAtHome.org](http://www.ItStartsAtHome.org).)

► **Watch:** Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level. Don’t forget to pass out the handouts and encourage your group to take notes.

► **Encourage:** Encourage your class to go to [www.ItStartsAtHome.org](http://www.ItStartsAtHome.org), download the Family Night Activity sheets, and try one with their family before you meet again.

*Note:* For more detailed information, please see the How to Use This Leader’s Guide document included in your download.
Before we start, did anyone try one of the Family Night Activities since we last met? Which activity did you do with your family last week? How did your kids respond?

Did you learn anything new about your kids, or yourself, as a result of that activity?

**ICEBREAKER**

**Leader:** Break into small groups of 4–7 for a brief “game show” to start things off. Appoint a “team captain” in each group. Give each team 20 seconds to discuss their answer and then quickly get responses from each captain. Keep things fun and casual. Have some goofy prize available for the winning team.

▶ **Question 1, from the world of literature:**

*In Shakespeare’s famous play, *Hamlet*, what was Hamlet?*

a. a talking frog
b. a troubled prince
c. a remote village
d. a breakfast food

[B is the correct answer]

▶ **Question 2, from the field of math:**

How many prime numbers are there between 1 and 35?

*Hint: The answer is itself a prime number.*

[11 is the answer: 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, 19, 23, 29, 31]

▶ **Question 3, from U.S. History**

How many U.S. Presidents have had last names beginning with a vowel?


▶ **Question 4**

*The first team to do this, call out.*

List the first names of all the children of everyone in your group in *alphabetical order.*
Leader: Thus endeth the game show. Award prizes, get chairs back in order, etc.

We have all sorts of information bombarding us these days, some of it important, some of it . . . not so much. Sometimes that onslaught of information can deafen us to what’s more important—relationships. And obviously I’m not just talking about the names of our kids, but who they are, what they think, what they love, what they’re good at, how they’re connecting with God these days. That’s the sort of thing we’re focusing on today.

Leader: Make sure you’ve passed out the handouts. Encourage your group to take notes during the video.

VIDEO

Play Session 3: Relationships: Your First Priority (XX minutes)

TALK ABOUT IT

Early in the video our hosts, Kurt and Olivia Bruner said something a bit surprising: “Children don’t usually reject Christianity because of bad teaching. They reject it because of weak relationships.”

Do you think this is true?

If so, why? Why would relationships be more important than teaching?
We met Roosevelt and Patricia in this video—the couple that was extremely busy, but somehow they made time for their children.

Do you ever have that problem? Do you ever worry that you’re spending so much time making a living that there’s no time left to share that life with your kids?

Roosevelt said, “I realize that having success in my family is more important than whatever work I do.”

That sounds good, but isn’t it hard to maintain those priorities? Is it even possible these days to make a decent living and still make time for your kids?

**Leader:** Every family has its own way. Roosevelt and Patricia seem like expert schedulers, and some folks in your class might object to the highly structured nature of their home, while others might applaud that. Some people might ask, “Do we really need to make so much money? Wouldn’t it be better for our kids if we took jobs that were less time-consuming, even if that meant a lower standard of living?” Others would insist that they do all this work for their kids. As a leader, you may step into any of those minefields—just be ready for some fireworks if it gets too personal.

In his teaching, Gary Thomas mentioned that sometimes well-intentioned parents make their kids feel like “projects.” What did he mean by that?

How can we avoid that? Don’t we want our children to develop in certain ways? Aren’t we trying to teach them certain things? Is there any way to do that without making them “projects”?

Gary passed on something he learned from Kevin Leman: “If the family doesn’t play together when the kids are young, they won’t want to play together when they get older.” He talked about how we push our kids to excel in soccer or math or music—all outside the home—and we can forget to play together at home.

Do you think this is a problem for many families today?

What can we do about it?
Turn to 2 Timothy 3:14. This is the apostle Paul writing to his protégé Timothy. Somebody read verses 14 through 17.

You might be familiar with those last few verses, which are often quoted to promote the value of Bible study. But there’s an important phrase at the beginning of this text that we shouldn’t overlook.

According to verse 14, why would Timothy become “convinced” to “continue” in the Christian tradition he had learned? (Because he knew the ones who taught it to him.)

Who is this talking about? From whom did Timothy learn the faith?

At first glance, we might think Paul is talking about himself, because he often calls Timothy “my son,” and was certainly instrumental in Timothy’s Christian development. But it goes on to talk about Timothy’s “infancy,” and Paul didn’t know Timothy until he was a young man. So what do we know about Timothy’s family?

Flip back to 2 Timothy 1:5. Somebody read that aloud.

Where did Timothy get his faith? (From his mother and grandmother.)

We know from Acts 16:1 that Timothy was born into a mixed marriage. His mother, Eunice, was Jewish and had accepted Jesus. (Apparently her mother, Lois, was also a Christian.) But his father was Greek, and apparently not a Christian. So even in this less-than-ideal upbringing, Timothy had learned about Christianity and embraced it.

But here’s where that phrase from chapter 3 comes in. He had learned the Scriptures, and they had equipped him to be the great leader he was becoming—but it was more than just words and ideas he had learned. “You know those from whom you learned it.” He got to see his mom and grandma every day as they lived in this less-than-ideal situation. He knew them. He had a relationship with them. He saw the “sincere faith” that “lived” in them. It was this relationship, Paul says, that convinced him to embrace God’s truth.
Turn to Colossians 3:12. One of the frustrating things for Christian parents is that the Bible doesn’t give a lot of explicit instruction in child-rearing. Apart from the “Do not exasperate” passage in Ephesians, a parallel passage in Colossians, and scattered proverbs, there’s not much.

But here’s a thought. Maybe being in a relationship with your children is a lot like being in a relationship with other people. Maybe the instructions we need are in the many passages that tell us how to show Christian love to one another. Colossians 3 is one of those passages. Would someone read verses 12–14?

What qualities are we supposed to “clothe” ourselves with? (Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.)

Do you think there’s a difference between “clothing ourselves” with these qualities and, say, just practicing them? (Obviously we’re called to act with these qualities, but the “clothing” metaphor suggests it’s more than a project, more than an occasional good deed—it’s part of our regular wardrobe.)

Obviously compassion and patience are important qualities for parents, but what about humility? Is it hard for a parent to be humble with children? How can we do this?

This passage suggests that we do two things if we have a “grievance.” What? (Bear with each other and forgive one another.)

What’s the difference between those two things?

Remember that Jesus said we should forgive people “seventy-seven times”? Well, maybe “bearing with” people is what we do after the third or fourth time. We put up with them. Their behavior rankles us, but we deal with it. We hang in there with the relationship, even though we have to keep forgiving.

Does forgiving children mean that we can’t punish them for misbehavior?

Of course not. Here’s where the parenting relationship is a bit different from other relationships, since you have responsibility for your children’s development. Punishment of some kind may be important to that development. And yet, if we’re honest, we’d have to admit that punishment often comes out of anger. The relationship gets broken. Forgiveness restores that relationship—even if the punishment is still enforced. “You are my child and I love you, but you’re still grounded for a week.”
Somebody read Colossians 3:15–17. Obviously this was written to Christians who met together as the church, but can we apply it to the home as well? Let’s consider a number of questions that this passage raises?

**Does the peace of Christ rule in our homes?**

**Are we thankful for our kids? And do we teach them to be thankful?**

**Does the “message of Christ” fill our home? Do we read and talk about Scripture together?**

**Do we sing all sorts of songs to the Lord in our home?**

**Do we honor the name of Christ in our home, in all we do as parents and children?**

And note how often “thankfulness” and “gratitude” appear in these verses. Are we modeling thankfulness for our kids?

This video series is suggesting that good parenting is about good relationships with your kids. It’s less about the facts you teach them and more about the person you are, and how you share yourself with them. Remember how Timothy knew the people who taught him, and that’s what brought him into the faith.

**GROUP THINK**

So . . . who are you? As parents, yes, but also as people, and especially as Christians? Who are you? That’s the most important thing you’re sharing with your kids. Don’t pretend to be better than you are. Just let the reality of Christ in your life emanate out to your family—in humility, gentleness, compassion, and all the rest. If you fake it, your kids will smell that a mile away. But if Christ is real to you—forgiving you, teaching you, transforming you—it will be a powerful testimony to those closest to you.

In 2 Corinthians 2:14 it says that God “uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere.” It’s a great image . . . aroma. When Christ is active in someone’s life, there is an unmistakable fragrance. People may love it or hate it, but they can’t miss the reality of it.
In the video, Kurt and Olivia used the acronym AROMA to talk about how to establish pleasant homes. We're going to use that in our group time today.

Look at the “AROMA Therapy” section on page 2 of your handout (in Leader’s Guide, page 9). We’ll take some time individually to evaluate our own homes, and then we’ll talk about it. Note that you’re asked to “grade” your own homes—on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being low in that area and 10 being really strong—and you’re also asked to jot down some general ideas that might be helpful to others.

**Leader:** After each person has finished going through the AROMA therapy handout, break into small groups of 4–7.

Now’s the time to talk with your group. You do NOT need to announce your “grades” to the group. That’s for your personal interest—and I would hope that you’d be able to talk with your spouse about it later. But please share your thoughts about how low-graded homes might improve. It might be that you or others might benefit from some of the ideas shared.

**Leader:** After 8–10 more minutes, or when everyone’s finished . . .

I do hope you’ll find time to go through this again with your spouse and see if there are any recommendations you can adopt in your home . . . to improve its AROMA.

Before you go, remember the family night activity suggested in the video. You’ll find instructions for that Family Night Activity and others on ItStartsAtHome.org (we’ve included an example for you to show your group on page 10). Try an activity this week, and come prepared next time to discuss how it went.
AROMA Therapy

A is for AFFECTION: 1-10 Grade: ________

Do you hug each other, provide caring touch, and often say kind things? Do your kids feel loved? Do the kids see mom and dad showing affection to each other?

What are some things that a low-graded home might do to improve in this area?

If a parent says, “I’m just not affectionate by nature,” what course of action would you recommend?

R is for Respect: 1-10 Grade: ________

Do the children respect the parents? Do the parents respect the children? Do husband and wife respect each other—and demonstrate this to the kids?

What are some things that a low-graded home might do to improve in this area?

If a parent says, “I’ll show respect to my kids when they earn it by showing respect to me,” what course of action would you recommend?

O is for Order: 1-10 Grade: ________

Do you have an accepted schedule? Does the whole family observe certain customs, traditions, and priorities? Do people have particular responsibilities? Do people know what’s expected of them? Do they know the rules? Granted, every home will have a measure of chaos, but is this causing anxiety or conflict among any family members?

What are some things that a low-graded home might do to improve in this area?

If a parent says, “I like to keep things crazy in order to nurture creativity,” what course of action would you recommend?

M is for Merriment: 1-10 Grade: ________

Do you laugh together? Do you enjoy one another’s company? Do you spread this joy to others? Is it important for you to plan fun things to do as a family?

What are some things that a low-graded home might do to improve in this area?

If a parent says, “We have simple tastes; we don’t need a lot of ‘merriment,’” what course of action would you recommend?

A is for Affirmation: 1-10 Grade: ________

Are you “cheerleaders” for your children? Do they know they have your support? Do you attend their activities and compliment them on their development? Do they feel that you are proud of them? Are they proud of you? Have you talked together about the love of God, the gifts of God, and how we can praise him and please him?

What are some things that a low-graded home might do to improve in this area?

If a parent says, “My kids know we support them; if we say it all the time, they’ll get conceited,” what course of action would you recommend?
Who is My Friend* *(filmed exercise for It Starts at Home Session 3)*

- **Main Point:** Explores how to choose friends who will help us grow in faith. They’ll learn that it’s what is on the “inside” that counts when choosing friends—God looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7 and Galatians 2:6).

- **Preparation:** You’ll need 4 cans of soda (2 diet, 2 regular), 1 large tub to put these in (a five-gallon bucket will do), duct tape, water, and a Bible.

- **Suggested Age:** Pre-School to Pre-Teen

- **Estimated Time:** 15 minutes

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**Step One:**

Take the soft drink cans and wrap them with duct tape so you can’t see what kind of soft drink they are. Fill the large bucket with water. Then, have the children examine the cans. Ask the kids, “What do you think will happen when I place the cans in the water? Will they sink, or will they float?” Put the cans in the water and watch as some float (the diet sodas) and some sink (the regular sodas).

**Step Two:**

Ask the following questions:

- How are the soft drinks like our friends? (They look the same on the outside, but they are different on the inside; some people seem nice, but aren’t.)

- What do you think makes some of the cans float? (More bubbles; more air in the can. Note: the scientific reason is that the artificial sweetener used in the diet soda is lighter in weight than the sugar used in the regular soda.)

- What do you think makes some people good friends and others not-so-good friends? (What they believe; how they act; what they think is important.)

**Step Three:**

Remove the duct tape and look at the soft drinks together. Then read aloud 1 Samuel 16:7 and Galatians 2:6. Ask:

- What does this passage tell us about people? (It’s what’s on the inside that counts; our hearts are important to God.)

- How can we make sure we “float” with God’s love? (Read the Bible; trust Jesus; go to church; pray).

Now open and enjoy the soft drinks together and share, “God tells us in the Bible that what’s on the inside is what’s important to Him. When we look for friends, we need to look beyond their clothes and appearance to see what’s inside. Ask family members to share ways they can discover what’s inside someone. Then pray, asking God to help them make good choices when making friends.


For more family night activities and parenting tools please visit ItStartsAtHome.org

10
Outline

Family Night Activities Recap

Icebreaker – “Game Show”

Video Session 3: Relationships: Your First Priority (XX minutes)

Talk About It

Bible Journey

► 2 Timothy 3:14–17

► Colossians 3: 12–14

► Colossians 3:15–17

Group Think

► AROMA Therapy

► Family Night Activity (more at ItStartsAtHome.org)

► Reminder – Come prepared to talk about how your family night activity went!
Session 4
Truth: What Are Your Kids Learning?

QUICK START

► **Read:** Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible Study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

► **Print:** Before class, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. (The handouts came with your download or are at [www.ItStartsAtHome.org](http://www.ItStartsAtHome.org).)

► **Watch:** Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level. Don’t forget to pass out the handouts and encourage your group to take notes.

► **Encourage:** Encourage your class to go to [www.ItStartsAtHome.org](http://www.ItStartsAtHome.org), download the Family Night Activity sheets, and try one with their family before you meet again.

*Note:* For more detailed information, please see the How to Use This Leader’s Guide document included in your download.
Before we start, did anyone try one of the Family Night Activities since we last met? Which activity did you do with your family last week? How did your kids respond?

Did you learn anything new about your kids, or yourself, as a result of that activity?

**ICEBREAKER**

Have you ever gotten new glasses or new contacts (or laser surgery) that changed the way you saw the world? What was that like?

**How important is it to see things clearly?**

If you're wearing glasses right now, could you take them off for a moment? Then tell us what you see. Tell us how you see. How is your vision different with and without the glasses?

Obviously people have different prescriptions, but we can learn one interesting thing about seeing... we can get by without perfect vision—it's just not as good. Even without your glasses, you can see the room, you can see people—they might be blurry blobs—but you might still be able to recognize them if they're right next to you. Still, I don't want you operating heavy machinery. Don't drive like that. You might have some vision, but you're not seeing completely clearly. [Thank you. You can put your glasses back on.]

In our lesson today, we'll be considering the importance of Truth in our family lives. How can you teach your kids the way things really are? Our video hosts bring up what they call the “Lenses Principle.” It comes down to what kind of lenses you're looking through.

As we just found out, you can sort of see reality even if your vision is less than perfect. In the same way, lots of people see life through the “lens” of a TV screen or a Facebook page. They filter everything through their love of money or their concern over what the neighbors say. They see other people as blurry blobs to be used for pleasure or advancement—and not as human beings loved by God.

But when we see reality through the lens of God’s Word—ah, that's when you finally get the right prescription. Let’s see more in today’s video.
Leader: Make sure you’ve passed out the handouts. Encourage your group to take notes during the video.

VIDEO

Play Session 4: Truth: What Are Your Kids Learning? (XX minutes)

TALK ABOUT IT

Early in the video, Matt Chandler talked about making certain assumptions when he saw other people’s kids misbehaving. Then he confessed to us, “I had a broken view of what was actually wrong with children.”

What was he talking about? What was this “broken view”? (The assumption that this behavior was merely a product of their environment . . . and probably how their parents were rearing them.)

What’s wrong with that view? What view did he come around to?

Leader: Take a moment and read the following out loud to the class.

Here’s what he said (in condensed form):

“The Bible is pretty clear that ultimately what’s wrong with our children isn’t some sort of moral external action, but really a state of their heart. . . . King David says, ‘surely’ he was ‘brought forth in iniquity.’ The Bible tells us in the book of Ephesians that we are ‘by our nature,’ or by our birth, ‘objects of God’s wrath.’ . . . Really the Bible paints this picture that sin isn’t something we do once we figure out the difference between right and wrong and choose wrong, but actually sin is a state of the heart that then overflows and leads to actions. . . .
“So our kids are born hopelessly broken, hopelessly in need of a heart transplant, a heart transformation. . . . Now I do believe that the environment can influence the type of rebellion and can gauge how serious the moral shortcomings work out, but ultimately it’s a heart issue, not a moral issue.”

How do you feel about that? Do you agree? Do you have problems with it?

What sort of reaction do you think you’d get if you read that quote to your neighbors, to your kids’ teachers, to your doctor, to the police?

Why do people have problems with that idea?

From watching your own children’s behavior, do you have more evidence that supports this idea (of us being born with “bad hearts”) or more evidence that refutes it?

One of the core values of modern society is self-esteem. We all want to feel good about ourselves. And so the idea that everyone is naturally sinful goes against the grain. This idea can be especially offensive when applied to children. Everybody wants to see kids as perfect and sweet and innocent—which sort of works until you have kids of your own.

Certainly there have been bad parents who beat the idea of original sin deep into their children’s hearts, making them feel worthless. But that’s not what we’re talking about here. Matt Chandler is suggesting that true self-esteem does not come from pretending that we’re naturally perfect—when we actually learn pretty early that we’re not. Instead, our sense of self-worth comes from a true sense of who we are—created and loved by God, fallen, but redeemed by Christ.

So if we’re not going to pretend that anyone is naturally good, including our kids, how will that affect our parenting? What is the parents’ job?

Education, really. Rather than trying to push all the buttons to help your “perfect” kids stay perfect, you’re teaching them the way things truly are, showing them how to deal with temptation, modeling ways to trust God for moral strength. It’s not just about setting up rules and structures, but about sharing spiritual power.
Does this approach actually ease the pressure from you as parents? Or does it make things harder?

In one sense, it might help you relax. Your children are not perfect specimens that you have to be careful not to mess up. They’re already messed up, and your task is now to explore with them the wonders of redemption.

Matt Chandler said at one point that in all parts of life, “I want to teach my kids theology.” What did he mean by that?

Is that something we all should do, or is he just being a theology geek?

What is theology? It’s simply the truth about God—who God is, but also how he interacts with us as humans. It’s not necessarily big words and bulky ideas. “God loves you.” That’s theology. “We have wandered away from him, but he wants to rescue us.” That’s theology.

In an interview late in the video, David said, “I’m afraid to specifically talk to the kids about God. I don’t think that I know enough to talk about God intelligently and I think that I might need to know more to do that.”

Do you know that feeling? Do you share it? How smart do you need to be to talk to your kids about God?

David went on to say something pretty brilliant. “But I’m not afraid to talk to them about my life. And they have lived through it and seen a transformation there that Christ has made in my life. And that by itself can speak more than any words that we can really say to them specifically.”

Do you think it’s enough to just live out your redeemed life for your kids—or do you need to talk to them too? Why do you say that?

There’s a passage that’s been mentioned a few times in this series—Deuteronomy 6:4–9. Take a look at part of that.

*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 6:6–9 (NIV)

Is that constant teaching, or is that just living, or is it both?
BIBLE JOURNEY

Turn to the most famous verse in the Bible, John 3:16. There is actually rich theology in that verse and the next few, but it’s also simple enough for your kids to get. Somebody read verse 16 out loud.

Now let’s ask some very basic questions just to make sure we get it. And this is also an approach you could use if you’re teaching this to your kids.

**According to this verse, how does God feel about the world?**

**How did he prove how he felt?**

Pause for a moment and consider the situation. Jesus was speaking to a religious guy named Nicodemus—who knew all the theology there was to know, but he still wasn’t getting this basic truth. Who was “the Son”? Jesus. So he was talking about himself. And he hadn’t gone to the cross yet, so at this point he’s just talking about how God “gave” the Son, but he knows he has been given as a sacrifice for our sin.

**What’s the result of this “giving” of the Son?**

**What does it mean to “believe” in Jesus?**

This is an important question—for you and for your kids. Does it just mean to believe that he existed? No, there’s more. Does it mean believing that Jesus is the Son of God? Yes, that’s moving in the right direction. When the Bible uses the word *believe*, it’s a strong word, meaning *trust, commit, follow*.

Think about what it would mean for you to tell your child, “I believe in you.” That’s far more than just “You exist.” It’s a connection. “I support you. I’m with you. I think you’re great. I love you.” The biblical word is something like that.

**What happens—and doesn’t happen—to those who believe in Jesus?**

They do not perish, but have eternal life. To perish is to die, but we know this is talking about more than physical death. Christians die, physically, but we know that there is a life with God after that. *Eternal* life is not just long-lasting—it’s a whole different kind of life, a glorious experience of connecting with the Lord. That’s what God wants for us. That’s why he sent Jesus.
Somebody read verse 17.

**What did Jesus come to do—and not to do?**

We really should start putting up signs at football games with “John 3:17” on them, because a lot of people in this world think that we’re condemning them when we talk about Jesus. Jesus came to save people, not to put them down.

Somebody read verse 18.

**Who is condemned and who is not?**

**What is the word already doing there? Why is that important?**

It goes back to the idea of original sin that we were talking about earlier. Human beings are already condemned, because we share in the guilt of Adam and Eve. What’s more, we add to that guilt with our own misbehavior. So we’re already doomed before we even hear about Jesus. Trusting in him is our way out.

Imagine that we’re all in a burning building. All the exits are blocked with burning debris. But suddenly a firefighter breaks through a wall and says, “Follow me to safety. If you trust me, I’ll rescue you.”

Now you could argue with him. “Are you saying I’m doomed if I don’t trust you? Oh, that’s real nice! Isn’t it narrow-minded to say that your way is the only way out of here?”

And he says, “You are already doomed. The house is on fire. I have created a safe way out. You don’t have to perish.” That’s sort of what verse 18 says.

Now somebody read verses 19–21.

**What’s the picture here?**

In the Bible, light is often a term for knowledge, or truth. It fits right into the “lenses” idea that we started with. God has given us truth, but a lot of people prefer to live lies. He shines his light in our lives, but people prefer to hide in the darkness.
As you bring up your children, it’s important to bring them to the light. Teach them the truth of God. Let them know about God’s love, about Jesus’ sacrifice, about eternal life, and the love he puts in our hearts for others. Shine the light of God’s truth on the false ideas they get from their friends, at school, on TV, online—wherever. Talk about what’s true and false, from God’s perspective. Shine that light into all the corners of your family life. Let it challenge your thinking as well as theirs.

GROUP THINK

Take a look at the “Light-Shining” Exercise on page 2 of your handout (in Leader’s Guide, page 9). You’re being asked to put into words what the people in your world—and your children’s world—think about these things. We’re talking co-workers, friends, neighbors, teachers, coaches—but also TV and Facebook and any other ways the culture comes crashing into your family life. Start with just Part 1 of each entry. Can you come up with a sentence or two that would describe, for that subject, the values, priorities, or opinions of the world around you? You’ll have a few minutes to jot down some notes—then we’ll gather in small groups to do Part 2.

*Leader:* Give them 3–4 minutes individually, then break into groups of 4–7 to discuss it.

Before you start discussing things, there are a couple of things to remember. First, the culture isn’t always dead-wrong about everything. Remember that Paul used the inside of pagan poets when he preached in Athens. But also note that often the most effective lies are half-true. It’s the other half that gets you.

Now for each of the subjects, share what you wrote down as the “culture’s” viewpoint, and then see if together you can put into words a more biblical approach. Keep it simple. If you get stuck on one, move on. And no fisticuffs.

*Leader:* Give them another 8–10 minutes to talk through this, then gather their attention and close.

This is what we’re dealing with, a lot of ideas out there that aren’t really true. And yet our kids might start thinking that way, if we don’t give them the lenses of God’s truth.

Before you go, remember the family night activity suggested in the video. You’ll find instructions for that Family Night Activity and others on ItStartsAtHome.org (we’ve included an example for you to show your group on page 10). Try an activity this week, and come prepared next time to discuss how it went.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How to Treat Other People</strong></td>
<td>Matthew 7:12; Leviticus 19:18</td>
<td>Matthew 6:19–24; 1 Timothy 6:6–10,17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Having a Good Time</strong></td>
<td>Philippians 4:4; Ecclesiastes 2:1–2</td>
<td>Psalms 20:7; Luke 12:15–21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technological Gadgets</strong></td>
<td>Part 1: The Culture’s Viewpoint</td>
<td>Proverbs 6:9–11; Colossians 3:23–24</td>
</tr>
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Come up with a sentence or two that describes the values, priorities or opinions of the world around you for each subject. Then compare those answers to what Scripture says about each topic.
Truth Treasure Map* (filmed exercise for It Starts at Home Session 4)

► Main Point: Shows that the difficult path may be the best path (Proverbs 2:1–5).

► Preparation: In addition to your Bible, have the following supplies ready. Draw two “treasure maps.”
  - Map #1 – Exciting in appearance with a few simple steps before reaching the treasure (a box labeled “False Treasure” containing dirty sox, crumpled paper or some other useless items).
  - Map #2 – Boring in appearance with lots of difficult steps before reaching the treasure (a box labeled “Truth Treasure” containing candy, money, a coupon to get ice cream or something else that will excite your children).

► Suggested Age: Elementary/Pre-Teen  ► Estimated Time: 20 minutes

Step One:
Show the kids both maps and tell them you want them to follow the directions to find two different treasures. Be sure to let the children take turns reading the clues or going to the next location so the younger or slower children can enjoy the experience. Make sure they follow the exciting, simple map first. It should lead to the box labeled “False Treasure” (containing dirty sox, crumpled paper or some other useless item).

Step Two:
Let the children complain about the contents of the “False Treasure” and then explain that “You’ve been following a map that seemed exciting and easy, but it was actually a lie!”

Step Three:
Now pull out Map #2 (the one that looks boring and difficult). Make sure the steps involved include crawling backwards, climbing stairs and other fun yet challenging steps. This map should lead to the box labeled “Truth Treasure” (containing candy, money, a coupon to get ice cream or something else that will excite your children). After the kids celebrate finding the “Truth Treasure” ask them which map was easier to follow? (The “False Treasure” map had easy steps.) Which was better? (The “Truth Treasure” map had a worthwhile reward.)

Step Four:
Read Proverbs 2:1–5 aloud together and emphasize that God promises great rewards for those who take the difficult path of truth rather than the easy path of lies. Consider memorizing together: “It’s best for you to seek what’s true!”


For more family night activities and parenting tools please visit ItStartsAtHome.org
Outline

Family Night Activities Recap

Icebreaker – “Glasses”

Video Session 4: *Truth: What Are Your Kids Learning?* (XX minutes)

Talk About It

Bible Journey

- John 3:16
- John 3:17
- John 3:18
- John 3:19–21

Group Think

- Light-Shining Exercise
- Family Night Activity (more at ItStartsAtHome.org)

Reminder – Come prepared to talk about how your family night activity went!
Session 5
Communication: Each Child is Unique

QUICK START

► Read: Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible Study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

► Print: Before class, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. (The handouts came with your download or are at www.ItStartsAtHome.org.)

► Watch: Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level. Don’t forget to pass out the handouts and encourage your group to take notes.

► Encourage: Encourage your class to go to www.ItStartsAtHome.org, download the Family Night Activity sheets, and try one with their family before you meet again.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use This Leader’s Guide document included in your download.
Before we start, did anyone try one of the Family Night Activities since we last met? Which activity did you do with your family last week? How did your kids respond?

Did you learn anything new about your kids, or yourself, as a result of that activity?

**ICEBREAKER**

Congratulations! You’ve been selected to take an all-expense-paid trip to the beautiful land of Macadamia. Get your passports ready, because you’ll be leaving next week. One small problem: The people there don’t speak English very much, and, chances are, you don’t speak Macadamian. But how much of a problem could that be?

So what would you do to prepare for this trip? Specifically, what would you do to make sure you’ll be able to communicate with the locals?

Well, you might try to find some crash course in that language. Or you might at least learn about the culture, so you’d know what to expect. (I hear they have a thriving nut industry.) Maybe you could arrange to hire an interpreter when you get there.

One thing you **wouldn’t** want to do is to read a book about how to speak English more effectively. That might be a great book, and it might be very helpful for your everyday life—but it won’t help you with the Macadamians.

Have any of you actually had an experience like that, traveling in a country where you didn’t know the language? How did you deal with that?

We sometimes have experiences like that even in English. Maybe someone is talking about computers or cars or sports or economic policy—and you just don’t get it, because you don’t have the basic vocabulary for that field. It’s frustrating! The speaker may be doing a great job putting thoughts into words, but those words don’t mean anything to the listener, and so there’s no real communication.

Does that sort of thing ever happen with your children? Does it ever seem as if you and they speak different languages?
That’s what we’re taking about today: Communication, and specifically the unique ways you’ll need to “speak the language” of each unique child.

**Leader:** Make sure you’ve passed out the handouts. Encourage your group to take notes during the video.

**VIDEO**

Play Session 5: Communication: Each Child is Unique (XX minutes)

**TALK ABOUT IT**

Early in the video, Olivia Bruner said: “There isn’t a cookie cutter approach to faith training that will work the same for every child because they have distinct personalities and go through different stages of development.”

Do you think this is true? Have you found it true in your own family?

So, if every child is different, is there any value in parenting books or even video series like this one? Can anyone else tell you what to do with your unique child?

**Leader:** Don’t be afraid to stir things up in a discussion like this, but the value of resources like this one is in the general principles they offer. These principles then need to be applied wisely in unique ways in each home. This isn’t a “one-size-fits-all” approach to parenting, but it does help to compare notes.
Gary Thomas picked up on the theme of uniqueness when he said this: “Each one of our children is so very different but . . . even though we raise our kids to be different, there is one common denominator, and that’s the reality of their faith.”

Do you think your children interact with God in unique ways? Or is there one approach to faith that we need to teach them all? For instance, should you demand that they go to church all the time, pray at certain times, join the youth group, and so on? Or might they just have a different way of connecting with God?

Gary stressed that the best way to raise “godly” children is to practice godly living ourselves, “for us to live in awe of God, for our children to watch as we walk with that sense of wonder at how great God is, that they could see we have a dynamic and real relationship with Jesus Christ, that we have a fellowship with God and it’s not just religion and that we revere God’s Word, they hear us talking about God’s Word and see us studying God’s Word. When they ask us questions we are bringing God’s Word in as an answer. They see that we relate to others in a way that is inviting and engaging and that we have our own ministry.”

Is it possible to talk about God too much? Can we turn off our kids by overdoing the godliness?

The key question is: Is it real? If you’re putting on a show of religion in order to manipulate your kids into being better-behaved, they will see right through it. But if your words are backed up by the reality of your life, then it can have a positive effect.

Gary talked about the way his kids “studied” him. He couldn’t hide. He couldn’t pretend. It was a sobering realization. He prayed, “Lord, help me be a better father.” That led him to conclude that the best way to raise your kids to be the people God wants them to be is for you yourself to be the person God wants you to be.

Gary said, “The Bible says you need to become the right person and then model that to your kids. We spend so much time trying to get our kids to behave, maybe what the Bible is telling us . . . is that we need to spend more time focusing on how we behave and let our kids catch that.”

Does that make sense? Does it ever really work that way?

Not only do your kids study you, but you can sort of “study” them. This is what Olivia was saying about the game they played in the car. To her surprise, the kids called her the smartest in the family. Do you remember why? Because she knew what they needed. Olivia said, “What they cared about was that I knew their needs. So for them what was important was that I was a student of them, and I learned their unique needs and their unique bent.”
Do you think most parents “study” their children, or is that a lost art?

How can you become a better “student” of your children?

**BIBLE JOURNEY**

Turn to 1 Corinthians 12:12. We’re going to look at a passage that’s about the church body. The question is: *Can we apply it to a Christian home as well?* Somebody read verses 12–14.

In this verse Paul is setting up a comparison, a kind of word picture. What is he saying?

The comparison is between the human body and the church. Our bodies have different parts, and yet it’s one body. The same can be said of the church, which Paul calls “the body of Christ.” It has different members, and yet it’s one body.

Can we say that about your home and the people in it? Are there different people, and yet one family?

Now it gets fun. Don’t be afraid to laugh as we read this next section. The apostle Paul has written us a situation comedy. Somebody read verses 15–22.

*Leader:* Get a good reader for this, to get the full effect.

In this absurd situation that Paul imagines, what’s the conflict?

Why is it absurd?

He imagines the parts of the human body sulking and whining about their part in the body. No one’s satisfied with what they do. The foot wants to be a hand and the ear wants to be an eye. Then the eye gets all huffy and says it doesn’t need the hand. It’s ridiculous because we need all of the parts. They’re all part of the same body, and they’re all important.

Jump down to verses 26–27. Would someone read those?
Now can we say the same thing about the family, your family? Why or why not?

To be fair, Paul is talking in this passage about spiritual gifts, special abilities given to Christians to be used together to build up the church and glorify God. If you glance at verse 28, you see reference to specific roles within the church. Our question here is whether there's a principle here that we can use in our families to honor each member even though they have different specialties.

What different qualities, abilities, and tendencies do you have in your family?

Think about differences in skills, interests, and emotions. Do you have a talkative child and a quiet child, an active child and a homebody, a scholar and an athlete? Do you yourselves, as parents, add to these differences?

Do these differences ever work together to make the whole family a stronger unit? When have you seen that happen?

Now let's go back to that situation comedy. We have feet feeling worthless because they're not hands. We have ears pouting because they can't see. We have eyes teasing hands because they're not as important.

This sort of thing would never happen in a family, would it?

Of course it happens all the time. Kids get jealous of each other. Parents prize one ability over another. Children sometimes feel worthless because they don't know what they have to offer.

So, what principle can we glean from 1 Corinthians 12 for our families?

Perhaps that every member of the family is important, that everyone has something to contribute, or that differences should be celebrated, not criticized.

Can we take it a step further? Do you think that people have different ways of interacting with God?

Do some meditate and others praise? Are some more verbal and others more active? Do some search for answers while others crave experience? Do some enjoy Christian fellowship while others like to go it alone?

Do you see differences like these in your family?

Do you find it surprising who gets blessed here? Are these the type of people you would expect to get a shout-out at the start of Jesus’ first big sermon?

It’s not the “spiritual giants,” but the “poor in spirit.” Not those who radiate the joy of the Lord, but those who mourn. Not the most dynamic disciples, but the meek ones. The point is that Jesus made a special effort—here and throughout his ministry—to reach out to people who interacted with God in off-beat ways. Those who might have been overlooked by the religious establishment were given special treatment by Jesus.

As you consider the spiritual differences in your family, do you have any who are “poor in spirit,” any mourners, any meek? Any who hunger for righteousness because they don’t have it? Any who make peace with the world in ways you wish they wouldn’t? Maybe you’re worried because they’re not connecting with Christ in your way, but maybe Jesus is connecting with them in a different way.

GROUP THINK

Teaching your children the truth about God involves several different components. The content that you’re presenting is only part of it. The key question is: Are they getting what you’re giving? Your presentation may be flawless, but you still won’t get through if you’re not teaching in the same way they’re learning.

Turn to the “Are They Getting It?” exercise on page 2 of your handout (in Leader’s Guide, page 8). As we go into this group time, you have the opportunity to evaluate your children on a couple of grids. Maybe this will give you some idea of how to better communicate with them. Fill out the grids on your own, and then share ideas with your small group.

**Leader:** Give them 3–4 minutes to work on their own, and then nudge them into groups to discuss the two Group Questions. After another 8–10 minutes, conclude.

There’s some extra space on the handout. Maybe you can come back to that later, with your spouse, to plan some new ways you could communicate with your children.

Before you go, remember the family night activity suggested in the video. You’ll find instructions for that Family Night Activity and others on ItStartsAtHome.org (we’ve included an example for you to show your group on page 9). Try an activity this week, and come prepared next time to discuss how it went.
Are They Getting It? Exercise

**Learning Style**

Researchers have identified three major learning styles.

1. **Auditory Learners** learn from **hearing**. Don’t ask them to read things, but if you talk to them, they’ll get it. Music is also helpful.

2. **Visual Learners** learn from **seeing**. Charts and pictures get through to them. They may tune out if you’re just talking.

3. **Kinesthetic Learners** learn through **action**. They need to touch stuff, to try it out, to play with it. It’s hard for them to sit still.

*For each of your children, consider which type of learner he or she is?*

*Group Question: What are the most effective ways to tell each of these types of learners about God?*

**Gospel Response**

Others have suggested that different people respond favorably to different ways of expressing the good news of Jesus.

1. Some need a **Challenge**. “This is true. It’s what you need. Will you accept it?”

2. Some respond to a **Mental** approach. Does the gospel effectively answer their questions about God? They want reasons and proof.

3. Some prefer **Stories**. Does this work in real life?

4. Some are more **Relational**. If they feel love from and toward the person who’s presenting the gospel, they will want to accept it.

*For each of your children, consider which type of teaching they tend to respond to.*

*Group Question: What are the most effective ways to tell each of these groups about God?*
Can’t Take it Back* *(filmed exercise for It Starts at Home Session 5)*

**Main Point:** Teach your children that they are responsible for what they say—both good and bad (James 3:3–12).

**Preparation:** You'll need a new tube of toothpaste for each child, paper, toothpicks or coffee stirrers, a twenty-dollar bill, and a Bible. Make sure you do this activity on a surface that you don’t mind getting some toothpaste on.

**Suggested Age:** Pre-School to Pre-Teen  

**Estimated Time:** 15 minutes

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**Step One:**
Give each child a sheet of paper, a new tube of toothpaste and a toothpick. Tell them that you want them to draw a picture with the toothpaste on the paper. They must use all the toothpaste in the tube.

**Step Two:**
After congratulating them on their toothpaste works of art, put the twenty-dollar bill on the table and say, “The first person to get all their toothpaste back into their tube gets this money!” Tell them they can use the toothpick to help get the sticky paste back into the tube.

**Step Three:**
After a while (and your child won’t be able to get all the paste back into the tube), talk about how trying to stuff paste back into a tube is just like our tongues and the words we say. You might say, “Once words come out of your mouth, it’s impossible to get them back in. So be careful what you say because you may wish you could take it back.”

**Step Four:**
Read and talk about James 3:3–12. Remind your child that we are responsible for what we say—for good or bad.


*For more family night activities and parenting tools please visit ItStartsAtHome.org*
Outline

Family Night Activities Recap

Icebreaker – “Macadamia!”

Video Session 5: Communication: Each Child is Unique (XX minutes)

Talk About It

Bible Journey

▸ 1 Corinthians 12:12–14

▸ 1 Corinthians 12:15–22

▸ 1 Corinthians 12:26–27

▸ Matthew 5:3–5

Group Think

▸ Are They Getting It? Exercise

▸ Family Night Activity (more at ItStartsAtHome.org)
  ▸ Reminder – Come prepared to talk about how your family night activity went!
Session 6  
Character: Preparing Your Kids for the Real World

QUICK START

► **Read:** Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible Study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

► **Print:** Before class, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. (The handouts came with your download or are at [www.ItStartsAtHome.org](http://www.ItStartsAtHome.org).

► **Watch:** Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level. Don’t forget to pass out the handouts and encourage your group to take notes.

► **Encourage:** Encourage your class to go to [www.ItStartsAtHome.org](http://www.ItStartsAtHome.org), download the Family Night Activity sheets, and try one with their family before you meet again.

*Note:* For more detailed information, please see the *How to Use This Leader’s Guide* document included in your download.
Before we start, did anyone try one of the Family Night Activities since we last met? Which activity did you do with your family last week? How did your kids respond?

Did you learn anything new about your kids, or yourself, as a result of that activity?

**ICEBREAKER**

**In the last week, how many people have you had conversations with that you don’t really know?**

The only way you know their names is if they wear a nametag. Your conversations include deep thoughts like, “Can I help you?” or “Paper or plastic?” In some cases, you see them regularly, you expect them to be there, but you still don’t really know them.

Let’s think through the people we’ve interacted with, just in the last seven days. Be as specific as possible. Don’t just generally say, “Salespeople.” Can you remember a specific salesperson who sold you something?

**Leader:** It would be great to make a list on a chalkboard or whiteboard, if that’s available, but it’s not essential. List them by description: “Post Office guy, 7-11 clerk, etc.” If the group gets into it, they might go on for a couple of minutes. You might even get people comparing notes: “Oh, I know her! I shop there too.” After three minutes, or when interest wanes, stop the listing.

We have just scratched the surface. It’s quite possible that each of us interacts with 50 people each week, just in the course of running our errands. There’s a world of people there, and God asks us to treat them all with his love. How can we do that? And, more to the point of this class, how can we teach our children to do that?

**Leader:** Make sure you’ve passed out the handouts. Encourage your group to take notes during the video.
Leader: This time we’re going to weave together the Bible study and the video discussion.

Matt Chandler made an interesting point right off the bat. He was looking at one of the Bible verses that tells children to obey their parents. Of course we love to quote these verses to our kids—it’s their responsibility to obey—but Matt sees something else:

“There’s an implicit command to parents in the command, “Children, obey your parents”—that there would be boundaries, rules and expectations for our children to obey. Unfortunately in our culture there’s this [assumption that] to put any kind of rules or any kind of expectations or any kind of grid of behavior in the home on children is somehow going to crush their little spirits. It’s somehow going to deprive them of individuality and personhood. Man, it couldn’t be further from the truth.”

What is he saying there? Do you agree? Do we have a responsibility to give our kids rules to obey?

How can we make sure our rules don’t “crush their little spirits”?

Matt went on to talk about discipline, and he was commenting on Hebrews 12, so let’s turn there now. This book was written to Jewish Christians who were suffering for their faith in Jesus. Would someone read verses 5–6?
Imagine that you’re a new Christian, and you’re experiencing the joy of your salvation—but then life gets difficult. People shun you. You lose your job. You’re treated like a criminal. How would you feel about these verses?

It is certainly tempting to ask, “Where is God when life gets tough? Is he punishing me in some way? Does this mean he doesn’t love me anymore?”

**How do these verses answer those questions?**

**The primary purpose of this passage is spiritual encouragement, but it also teaches something about parenting. What parenting principle does it present?**

Discipline does not indicate a lack of love, as some might assume. On the contrary: The Lord disciplines the one he loves. Discipline is an expression of love—not only for the Lord, but also for parents.

Would somebody read verses 7–9? Keep in mind the double-purpose here. It’s encouraging believers, but it’s using some pretty good parenting principles to do so.

**What do these verses assume?**

It’s mostly more of the same. Discipline is proof of parental love. If you’re not disciplined, then you don’t really belong to the family.

**Have you ever had a situation like this? Your kids are playing with other kids, and together they do something wrong. Which ones do you discipline?**

You might correct the other kids in some way, but you focus your discipline on the children you’re responsible for. You discipline the ones you love.

**What does verse 9 say about how children respond to discipline?**

They “respect” it. It’s not enjoyable, but at some level children understand the need for discipline. It’s not crushing their spirits; it’s giving them a structure that helps them grow.
Would someone read verses 10–11? This is still drawing the comparison between human parents and our heavenly Father.

According to these verses, what is the purpose of discipline? What is its end result?

“Our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.”
“A harvest of righteousness and peace.”

Can we apply these things in some way to our discipline of our children? What do we want for them?

We want what’s **good** for them.

We want them to share in God’s **holiness**.

*And when you read “holiness,” you can always think of “wholeness.” It is the full measure of who God wants us to be.*

We want them to act with **righteousness** in the world.

*And righteousness in the Bible isn’t what you don’t do, but the good things you do to help others.*

We want them to have **peace** with God, with others, with their families, with themselves.

In the video Matt Chandler unpacked the future aspect of discipline:

“I think we have a tendency to think wrongly about discipline. . . . We think of either corporal punishment or . . . time out or . . . something like that. But in reality discipline is so much bigger than that. Discipline ultimately is a view of the future that’s working today. . . . If you think about it in terms of training a soldier or training an athlete, you have this end in mind. I need this man or woman to be able to do this and so . . . let’s reverse engineer that and say, ‘Okay, since that’s what I want them to do tomorrow, what do I need to do today to build him up or her up and get them there? And so discipline really is a long view of today.”

When you discipline your children, do you have “a view of the future”? Do you have an end in mind?

How could that approach change the way you administer discipline?
Sometimes, let’s be honest, discipline is about changing a kid’s behavior right now. Can you scare them into being still, being quiet, or not terrorizing their little sister? It’s push-button stuff—you do whatever works.

But Matt is suggesting we lift our eyes and look into the future. What kind of person are we shaping? How will this discipline contribute to the good, holy, righteous, peaceful life we want for them in the future?

Is it really possible to discipline like that, or is that some kind of unattainable ideal? How does it work in real life?

Take a moment to mull over the question Matt raised. What is the end we have in mind? Not just the purpose of a particular disciplinary tactic, but the whole purpose of your parenting.

What kind of person do you want your child to become? What kind of future do you want for them? Not just how things will go for them, but how they will affect their world.

There’s space on page 1 of the handout for you to jot down your thoughts on this. I know you have deep feelings about this. See if you can put some of them into words. We’ll have a few minutes of silence for you to do that.

Leader: After a few minutes . . .

I really hope that you can share this with your spouse, and maybe even with your kids. You know, there are lessons like this for kids—teenagers especially—that deal with “How to Get Along with Your Parents.” And somewhere along the line, they realize that parents and children want the same thing—that the kids would grow up to have good lives, where they make good decisions for themselves and take responsibility for these decisions, where they make a positive difference in the world. Everyone wants that—the conflict comes over how soon that happens. It’s mostly a matter of timing. But when you take the long view, you and your children are allies, co-workers in the task of their development. And so it might be helpful to share your dreams with them, and encourage them to express their own dreams for the future.

We saw a couple of amazing stories in the video today—Christina’s story at the beginning and Waverly’s story at the end—and I want to talk a little about them. Both of these involve creative outreach to people in need, and both of them are involving both children and parents.

What do kids learn when the whole family is actively working to help others?

How did these two things get started—Christina’s outreach and Waverly’s program? Do you remember?
In Christina’s case, she said: “There were people around me that were hurting to know Jesus and I didn’t see them. I was too busy. So I simply prayed that God would open my eyes and if I saw people with a need I promised God that I would do whatever I could to be the hands and feet of Jesus to them.”

That’s a dangerous prayer to pray, isn’t it? It’s the kind of request God loves to grant. Suddenly Christina had opportunities to help people in need. And don’t you love that scene where she’s with her son in a drive-thru, and the clerk says she needs something, and the kid says, “Mom, why do these people ask you for things?”

And her answer: “It’s because I prayed that God would show me the needs that people have around me.” There’s something amazing going on in that family, and that kid will never forget it.

Waverly’s story is even more astonishing, because she’s just a kid herself. But in this case she saw a need and wanted to help. So she asked her parents.

**Now be honest. Imagine a child of yours comes to you and says, “There’s a needy person. I want to help.” What would you do?**

Of course there are complications. It’s never that easy. It was no doubt a whole lot of work for Waverly and her parents. But what a life-lesson!

**GROUP THINK**

We’re going to take our group time today to brainstorm ways that we could do some similar things. Take a look at the “Creative Outreach” Exercise on page 2 of your handout (in Leader’s Guide, page 8). Remember that brainstorming is about saying yes rather than no. Don’t shoot down ideas, even if they’re a little “out there.” Write down all the interesting, crazy, love-motivated ideas you hear.

**Leader:** Break into groups of 4–7. Give them at least 10 minutes to brainstorm, or until the interest flags. Then pull them all together to share their best ideas. See if there are any workable ideas that the group could move forward on. Maybe you could even set a future meeting to discuss what to do next.

Before you go, remember the family night activities that we’ve seen over the past 6 sessions. You’ll find instructions for several Family Night Activities on ItStartsAtHome.org (we’ve included an example for you to show your group on page 9). This is the last session of this series, but that doesn’t mean you have to stop doing family nights together. I’d encourage you to keep it up and make that special time a lasting part of the Legacy you are building in your family.
Creative Outreach Exercise

How could your family reach out to needy people with the love of God?

Could several families do some project together?

Could you make it a church-wide project? (NOTE: Sometimes this works extremely well, but sometimes there's bureaucracy to deal with.)

Might this involve the many people we listed at the beginning of this session—something like Christina was doing?

Are there other groups of people in the area with specific needs that our families could help meet?

What will we and our children learn from such a project?
Waverly’s Family Serving Together

Waverly, the young girl you met in the video, was only ten years old when she started packing backpacks for a local back-to-school program. She inspired her siblings and her parents to get involved and now they have their own outreach ministry. There are many ways for your family to serve others; the important thing is to get started.

► **Main Point:** Make a difference in the life of someone else while you deepen your relationship with God and with each member of your family by serving together (Matthew 20:24–28).

► **Suggested Age:** All ages

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**Step One:**
Find some time to talk together as a family. Read Matthew 20:24–28 and discuss Jesus’ mandate that we serve others. Discuss what kinds of things each of you are passionate about. Are you drawn to helping kids, the elderly, the poor, or the sick?

**Step Two:**
Check with your local church and see what opportunities they already have for you to serve together as a family. In addition, many cities have family services departments, nursing homes, soup kitchens, crisis pregnancy centers or shelters that you can call and get information about how to serve. There are also other organizations, like World Vision, that give you the opportunity to make a significant difference in the life of a child in a developing country. While this requires a monetary commitment, it also gives your family an opportunity to write letters and email this child as you care for their basic needs.

**NOTE:** As you narrow down where you are going to serve, make sure that you keep the safety of your family in mind, especially if you have small children. Find an activity that is age appropriate and that you can participate in together, where you can see your children at all times.

**Step Three:**
Serve. Be open to the Holy Spirit’s leading in your life, and in the lives of your family members. After you serve together, spend some time talking with your family about the event. Be open to creative ideas from you kids on other ways that you can make a difference.

For more family night activities and parenting tools please visit ItStartsAtHome.org
Family Night Activities Recap

Icebreaker – Conversations with people you don’t know

Video Session 6: Character: Preparing Your Kids for the Real World (XX minutes)

Bible Journey

► Hebrews 12:5–6

► Hebrews 12:7–9

► Hebrews 12:10–11

► What is the end we have in mind?

Group Think

► Creative Outreach Exercise

► Family Night Activity (more at ItStartsAtHome.org)