

SESSION 7: PARENTING

- Review **Before Session #7**

Traits of Effective Parenting

Parents may excel in some of these areas and fall short in others, but each trait can transform your parenting, filling your children's hearts and minds with God's truth and bringing wisdom into your homes:

Love

John the apostle tells us that we learn love by looking at the love God has shown us. God's love came first and it is a truly sacrificial love. *"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins"* (1 John 4:10).

Do you know what you love? Look at the people, activities and things you're attached to. Look at the sacrifices you make to see those people, do those activities or use those things. These are the areas of your life where you love. Children can see where your priorities are, where your love is directed.

God's love helps parents counteract our natural selfishness. His love reveals itself in His commitment to us and His sacrifice for us, long after our emotions have faded away. Children learn God's love through the sacrificial commitments we make to them and teach them to make.

Respect

The apostle Paul writes that we should think like Christ and treat others as more important than ourselves (Philippians 2:3). Respect recognizes the best in people. It is more than acknowledging a child's accomplishments. Children and teens are worthy of respect because God created them and loves them.

Respect teaches us not to treat others as unimportant. Nothing hurts a child more than being treated as if he is useless, and almost nothing encourages him more than being respected and valued.

One way to show respect to your family is to watch your language. Refuse to use cruel language — whether directed toward family members in your home or outsiders. Our language habits really do influence our ability to model respect to our children.

Intentionality

Being intentional means talking about and living out our Biblical core-values and priorities before allowing other influences into our home. This trait nurtures a consistency in family life that reinforces the other traits. When parents are intentional, they grow in wisdom and are able to keep their focus on how they act as believing parents (Colossians 1:10).

It is easy to be passive and let media and other influences set our family's priorities, but it's more effective to pay careful attention to *how* we live our lives. This is intentionality: making decisions as parents about how we will own the spiritual atmosphere in our homes.

Boundaries and Limits

Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend, authors of the “Boundaries” book series, write that the purpose of boundaries in parenting to “let good things in and keep bad things out.” Hebrews 12:1 says that in order to run our race well, we need to shake off the things that keep us from reaching our goal. Ordering our home with healthy boundaries for kids and adults helps us do that.

Being deliberate about boundaries — for media, behavior, relationships, godly living and a vibrant faith — means we do not let culture determine what is healthy for our family. Proverbs tells us, “Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge” (14:7). If we don’t set our own boundaries in our families, other influences — culture, extended family or trends — will set our children’s moral boundaries, and we may become surprised and dismayed by what they have learned.

Gratitude

As Paul begins his letter to the Philippians, he tells them how thankful he is every time he thinks of them (1:3-4). Gratitude is not just a polite reaction to something good. It is a cultivated habit and a vital part of healthy relationships.

When we practice gratitude in our families, it helps children and parents fight selfishness, which causes division among families and friends. When gratitude is expressed on a regular basis and in deliberate ways, it helps our children learn to see all the good God does in our lives. A natural outcome of this is that we learn to naturally praise Him, regardless of how we feel in the moment.

Grace and Forgiveness

Grace and forgiveness shock us. God forgave us while we were still sinners. He shows grace to imperfect people and continues to involve them in His plan.

Parents need to be willing to model forgiveness and grace to their children, regardless of the personal cost. Human nature prevents us from easily giving grace and forgiveness, yet we learn from God’s Word that we need to give both or we can’t expect to be forgiven (Matthew 6:14-15).

Adaptability

While he was in prison, Paul said something amazing: “I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content” (Philippians 4:11). Paul learned to find peace in Christ, despite his situation. His personal happiness was not attached to his position, how well he was doing or what he was doing.

Teaching adaptability helps our children find peace — a deep peace that is stronger than the stresses and trials of life. Peace counteracts the unproductive worry that causes us to lose our trust in God. This flexibility and resilience, grown in difficult circumstances, allows a family to face both hardships and joys together, as they grow deeper in their faith.

Good Traits, Good Decisions

God’s wisdom gives us direction for not only recognizing our mistakes, but also correcting them. In parenting, it is no different. God’s way of life is the abundant life (John 10:10), and this life gives parents the opportunity to watch their children grow up making good decisions and avoiding decisions they may later regret. And learning how to live out these traits in our parenting gives our children a model for living out His abundant life.

- **Review Last Week's Homework (Review Roles):** 20 minutes
- **Small Group Discussion: Traits of Effective Parenting:** 20 minutes
 - **From the information about the *Traits of Effective Parenting*:**
 - ✓ What did you learn from reading the above information?
 - ✓ Plan to talk about parenting styles BEFORE you have children.
- **Small Group Discussion: Plan a Weekly Family Meeting:** 20 minutes

IT'S NOT TOO SOON TO START!

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A FAMILY MEETING?

The family meeting is a time to regularly connect and communicate with one another. It's an opportunity to discuss issues that may have come up during the week and to brainstorm solutions to problems. The meeting also gives a chance to share victories and celebrate achievements.

HOW OFTEN DO WE HAVE FAMILY MEETINGS?

A week is just enough time to identify victories and tackle challenges before they get too big.

HOW LONG ARE THE MEETINGS?

They should last approximately 30 to 45 minutes (*no more than 60 minutes*).

WHAT'S ON THE FAMILY MEETING AGENDA?

Have regular topics on your family meeting agenda. *Tie the Bible into as much of the meeting as possible!*

A typical agenda is as follows:

✓ **Welcome**

The welcome is simply an announcement of the commencement of the meeting.

✓ **Loving words**

Take turns sharing something you love about the person sitting to the right or the left of you. Share a compliment to that person only.

✓ **Review last week's minutes**

Keep notes and review from the last week and hold everyone accountable to their "ownership!"

✓ **Review next week's schedule**

For this part of the meeting we take out the calendar and discuss any events and activities coming up in the next week. The schedule part of the meeting helps you align your calendars and keep organized so that appointments don't get missed and the family knows what to expect.

✓ **What went well this past week?**

Share happy memories and achievements from the past week.

✓ **What were the challenges from the past week (*brainstorm how to handle/overcome them*)?**

Discuss any of the frustrations or challenging situations we've encountered over the past week. Then we brainstorm Biblical solutions to help one another avoid these challenges in the future.

✓ **Job description review**

Instead of having "chores," everyone should have a job to do in the home. These "jobs" are the responsibility of the *owner* and should be reviewed and monitored.

Basic ground rules.

- *Use the Bible as a guide.*
- *Do not interrupt one another.*
- *Brainstorm and share in a positive way.*
- *No tattling or picking on one another.*

We keep meeting minutes.

Keep the meeting minutes in a binder for future reference (including next week).

Do something fun.

Family meetings need to be a positive experience for everyone, so that they are looked forward to. So, decided to end every family meeting with a fun family activity. Spend at least an hour after the meeting connecting and spending time together as a family.

So what about you? Will you have weekly family meetings?

- **Discuss This Week's Homework:** 10 minutes

Focus on the **FIRE Journaling Method** and it will give you more insight to what God says about parenting!

- **Talk about what you learned in Session 7. Will YOU start your weekly family meeting? Start it NOW, before you have kids and make it a weekly priority.**
- **Parenting starts with a strong relationship with God and each other.**
 - ✓ What are some things you can do to keep your relationship strong BEFORE children?
- **Be consistent NOW and start practices to keep God FIRST and you and your spouse SECOND, so that your future children will have a foundation of security that will affect their lives and generations to come.**
- **Read info for Session #8 on pages 49-54, so YOU can start defining your family core values AND mission statement.**