

SESSION 1:

PUT ON YOUR OXYGEN MASK FIRST!

Welcome and Program Overview: 10 minutes

Session #1 Teaching: 10 minutes

We all know that when we enter an airplane and take our seats, we put our seatbelts on, make some small talk with our neighbor and start to check our e-mail for the last time. Then we hear the flight attendant's familiar message, "If we lose cabin pressure oxygen masks will fall from the ceiling, it is very important for you to put the oxygen mask on yourself first before you put it on your child." We all know the logic behind this message. If you can't breathe, how will you assist your child?

...and to aspire to live quietly, to attend to your own matters, and to work with your own hands, as we instructed you. Then you will behave properly toward outsiders
1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

The same is true as a parent, if you are not emotionally and spiritually healthy you will have a lot of difficulties managing your children. The role you have as a single parent is not for the weak of heart.

So, this study we will start with...you putting on your oxygen mask and breathing in the truth of your identity, stopping the negative talk from disturbing your peace, and the freedom you can find in forgiveness. Then we will cover helpful tips for discussion with your group.

This first week we will share our stories. Try to stay factual versus emotional for this session. Think of yourselves as a team...you are on the same journey and this is an opportunity to build friendships which will produce a support system that you all need.

Small Group Discussion: 25 minutes

- Are you widowed or divorced?
- How many children are you raising? (Give their ages too)
- If divorced do you share custody and how faithful is your ex-spouse in following through with their commitment to help you with the children?
- What would you say is your biggest struggle right now? Here are some ideas: financial, help with children, home and or car maintenance, consistent discipline, an angry child.
- In an average day, what percentage of your energy and time and worry is devoted to non spiritual things?
- What keeps you busy and commands your attention?
- When you consider experiencing more of the spiritual realm, are you eager, excited, optimistic? OR... Are you anxious, confused, overwhelmed, unsettled and skeptical?
- Discuss how skeptical you are right now about the spiritual realm and your ability to come into contact with it. If you're skeptical, what is the source of doubt? Dig deep and spend some time discussing this as a group. Can you identify a particular experience of influence in your life that may hold you back from getting all God wants you to get out of this class?

Finish this session by writing in your journal about your feelings and your expectations of this next study, and PLEASE be honest!

Small Group Wrap-Up: 10 minutes

What did you cover in your small group time? What were the biggest take-aways and action items?

Discuss This Week's Homework on next page: 5 minutes

FIRST: Discuss "Listening Prayer"

Read **John 1:43-51**. Nathanael, one of the disciples, recognized his daily need to seek out God in quiet and reflection. Because he was diligent, Jesus met him in a very personal way. Now, read **Psalms 139**, and view God as a father who wants to spend time to get to know you as His child! This week commit to 60-minutes each morning or evening whichever ever works for your busy schedule to kick-start this study! Adjust your schedule, so you can experiment with **"listening prayer" and journaling EVERY DAY!**

First, find a quiet place that brings you peace, perhaps outside, where you can sit still for fifteen minutes. Pray against distraction and confusion and invite the Holy Spirit to direct your thoughts. After 15 minutes, hopefully, you are fully relaxed. Then, look around and consider what is in front of you right now. Yes, physically in front of you. What do you see? Take it in. Take out your journal and describe what you see in one or two sentences. When you're done, do it again. Take another five minutes and look harder. Consider what's underneath whatever you see. What is going on beneath? Above? Beyond? What is the deeper truth? And again, in one or two sentences, describe what comes to mind. Now, if you're not already uncomfortable, **let's do it AGAIN!** Spend another five minutes looking again. Look even harder. Deeper. Further. It'll surely be uncomfortable, and you may be saying to yourself. "I've done this already!" **Push through anyway.** Stay with it and ask what God is trying to show you here. What is He trying to give you here? What does He want to teach you today? How is He trying to guide you? To love you. When you're done, journal some more.

End the week by watching this video on identity and then journal: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsDQEb-qlyM> - What does it mean to you that God thinks of you as a masterpiece?

SECOND: Discuss Family Meetings

Without family discussions, many parents don't really have any idea whether or not their teaching is ever absorbed. In order to create this vital shift in your family dynamic, it may be necessary to establish a new direction for your home—one that will ultimately benefit both parents and kids. If it's silent when you start this new strategy, don't feel as though you need to be the one to fill it. Instead, get comfortable with silence, and wait for your kids to speak. By giving them time to formulate their thoughts, you put them in a better position to ask future, vital questions. Give them time to brainstorm and work independently too. Do not put them under pressure to speak all the time. First, give them a chance to ponder and reflect silently so they can focus, and come up with creative, original ideas. In short, do not make them speak or question just for the sake of it. All you have to do is create a spark and give them the encouragement they need!