

SESSION 8: NEXT STEP RESOURCES

- **Welcome & Review Last Week's Homework/LIFE Starters: 15 minutes**
- **Session #8 Teaching: FIRST, understand your children's path: 15 minutes**

We've talked a lot about why it's so important to be a great mom, but today, we are going to cover some practical tips (and several resources) to best understand your children and then continue your growth path in Christ! Kids are all so different, just like we are. God made us all with special gifts and it's never too early to uncover those gifts in your children. We've focused on connecting your children to God at an early age through this study, but we all know that some kids find it easier to connect with God. Some connect through their intellect, while others may prefer using their surroundings, routines or service. Pastor and author Gary Thomas refers to these temperaments as "sacred pathways." Although your child may have a combination of these pathways that make it easier to be drawn closer to God, one or two of them may stand out a bit more than others. Thomas notes that Christians all have different and acceptable ways of demonstrating their love for God. "Our temperaments will cause us to be more comfortable in some of these expressions than others – and that is perfectly acceptable to God," Thomas writes in his book Sacred Pathways. "In fact, by worshiping God according to the way He made us, we are affirming His work as Creator."

Most Christian parents assume that their way of connecting with God is the way their children will or should connect with Him. But there is no one size fits all approach to faith. "God wants to know the real you, not a caricature of what somebody else wants you to be," Pastor Thomas notes. "He created you with a certain personality and a certain spiritual temperament. God wants your worship, according to the way He made you."

An intellectual parent will tend toward deep Bible study with her children, while a caregiver will focus on finding family service projects and a naturalist will spend a lot of time out in nature with his children. If I am an extremely extroverted enthusiast, it might look odd to me if my introverted child would rather sit in quietness and contemplate God's love or ponder a section of Scripture. I may feel that my child lacks faith, but the truth may be that my child connects with God in a different way than I do. God, who delights in our differences, desires to draw each of us to Him. I can, and should, look for teachable moments, but these may look different for each child. As parents we should also consider helping our children find mentors who connect with God in the same way that they do, particularly if their spiritual temperament is the complete opposite of ours.

So what is our role as parents in our children's personal connection to God? Our role is to open our eyes to the unique way God is communicating with our children. Then we can respond by finding ways to partner with Him to encourage their relationship with Jesus.

Some people find it easier to connect with God through their surroundings or routines, while others may prefer service or using their intellect. A child's dominant spiritual pathway provides more potential points of connection with God. Although your child may have a combination of these seven temperaments, you'll find that one or two of them may stand out a bit more than the others.

•The Traditionalist

Most children begin life with a need for routine. Traditionalists not only thrive in this environment, but as they grow, they continue needing structure in their faith. Consistent worship times, structured prayers and reliable and meaningful celebrations benefit these young children.

As traditionalists grow older, they may lean more toward another temperament, while still relying on the basic faith structure they've grown up with. Others will become more defined in their traditionalist temperament. They may create their own daily rituals or homework routines; these children thrive on consistency.

To incorporate faith-routines into their lives, create special celebrations for Advent, Lent and Pentecost – celebrations that may feel restrictive to non-traditionalists, but will bring life to someone of this temperament. These children also thrive when they pray at certain times of day or when their prayer times are based on external cues, such as a school bell.

Bible characters to check out:

- Abraham (built a lot of altars)
- Esther (built up her courage to break a rule to save the Jews)
- Bible passages to read together: Colossians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

•The Naturalist

Some children may be wired to connect with God through nature. Just like some adults feel closest to God when on the top of a mountain or while fishing, many children feel closest to God while enjoying His creation. They may understand spiritual metaphors better when they are related to the natural world. God uses nature – weeds, gardens, pets, clouds and people – to draw these children closer to Him. In the case of the naturalist child, a parent will need to help him approach creation mindfully and with an ear bent toward the Creator. If your children are young, you can and should take the lead in pointing out how God's creation draws us toward Him, similar to the conversation I had with my son. Eventually it will be a natural way for your child to connect with God. Otherwise, they may have a tendency to give nature credit for itself. Talking about nature as a creation of God is key to drawing the naturalist's eyes to the Creator.

Bible character to check out:

- Elijah (a prophet who moved around a lot)
- Deborah (judged Israel under a date palm tree rather than from a tent)
- Bible passage to read together: Psalm 19:1-6

•The Caregiver

The temptation of a caregiver is the same struggle felt by Martha: She was so busy serving Jesus that she forgot to use that service as a way to get to know her Savior. It is fairly simple to expose a child to Christian service. It is another thing altogether to show him how to let his service draw him closer to Christ. When you talk about the child's acts of service, have him consider which were done with a pure motive to bless others in Jesus' name and which were done out of pride or feelings of righteousness. Finding the right motivation is key for this child.

Bible characters to check out:

- Lydia (a seller of purple cloth who showed hospitality to Paul)
- Stephen (supervised the care of widows and orphans in the early church)
- Bible passage to read together: Matthew 25:31-46

•The Activist

Have you ever met a child who became incredibly upset over injustice? We've probably all seen news stories of children who latch onto a particular cause, dedicating their young lives to it. We may be tempted to shield our children from the evil in the world, to keep them in their safe bubble of family and school, but if we choose to ignore the world beyond us, an activist child will become completely overwhelmed by it when she discovers what is happening.

As a parent, your job is to allow your child to witness the ills of the world, in manageable and age-appropriate chunks, to help her develop God's passion for the downtrodden. Most activists won't need to be told to stand up for a cause. You will more likely need to hold her back to help her find balance, once she's recognized God's heartbeat. However, the temptation of any activist is to become proud in her stand against evil, forgetting her relationship with God. The role of the parent will be to help her seek God's will, wisdom and humility in her work, using her activism to draw closer to God's love and truth.

Bible characters to check out:

- John the Baptist (prepared the way for Jesus)
- Shiphrah (one of the midwives who saved Israelite babies from Egyptians)
- Bible passage to read together: Isaiah 58

•The Intellectual

As a parent, your job is to feed your child's intellectual fire with challenging material. It may be books that make him think deeper about faith, Bible studies that you do together or even buying him a concordance for his birthday. Many intellectuals also make excellent teachers because they love to share what they have learned. The temptation here is to become arrogant in knowledge and prideful in the treatment of others, exchanging the Tree of Life for the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil as Adam and Eve did. Parents can help children balance their growing body of knowledge by encouraging them to live out what they've learned in their relationship with God and toward others. If the intellectual pathway rings true for your child, consider partnering with him to teach a Sunday school class for younger children or allow him to teach younger siblings.

Bible characters to check out:

- Ethiopian eunuch (accepted Jesus after Philip ran alongside his chariot)
- Priscilla (who opened her home to Paul and learned about Jesus from him)
- Bible passage to read together: Acts 8:27-38

•The Enthusiast

As a child in the tabernacle, Samuel clearly heard the voice of God. He spent his life following direct orders from God and prophesying to the Israelites. His life was filled with the mystery of nighttime voices, direct revelation from God and even calling down thunderstorms in the name of God. To many, this sounds terrifying and impossible, but to our children with the enthusiast temperament, this type of relationship with God sounds incredible.

You may have a child who is enthusiastic about discerning God's voice and seeking His will. Parents with an enthusiast child will need to learn how to welcome their child's connection with God and help develop her discernment skills through biblical knowledge and understanding. Reinforce the truth that God will never contradict His Word. If your child believes she's sensing the prompting of the Holy Spirit, help her to search through the Bible to find a scriptural foundation that affirms God's perspective.

Bible characters to check out:

- Samuel (the prophet)
- Anna (a prophetess)
- Bible passage: Ephesians 5:15-20

WHAT MOM NEEDS...

Mothers have a special calling to love and care for their children and raise them to know God. With this calling come many questions, challenges, and joys. From guidance on raising godly kids, to refreshment for your soul, these Bible studies will equip and encourage moms in their daily walk with God.

1. Parenting Bible Study Bundle

Discover how you can raise balanced, Godly children in a chaotic world.

13 Session Bible Study

Parents have the special privilege and calling to guide their children and help them grow into balanced, God-honoring adults. This calling requires constant sacrifice and increasing wisdom. In this bundle, you'll find biblical support for your journey to raise Christ-centered children. You'll also receive encouragement as you learn to manage expectations and grow in your own walk with God.

2. Becoming a Balanced Woman

Practical, biblical perspectives on self-worth, stress, confidence, and contentment.

6 Session Bible Study

The demands of life pull us in different directions every day. In the midst of trying to keep up, it's easy to start believing lies about our identity and become unhealthy physically, emotionally, and spiritually. This six-session study guides you to grow in your relationship with God and get practical, biblical perspectives on self-worth, stress, confidence, and contentment.

3. Children and Materialism

Learn to make deliberate choices to grow children of faith and stewardship.

4 Session Bible Study

Materialism permeates our everyday life. Commercials, magazines, and the Internet blare societal values that are distinctly worldly, not godly. As a result, many of us have far more possessions than we actually need or use, and this tendency to accumulate things sends the wrong message to our kids. Ever heard the expression "values are caught, not taught"? We need to walk the truth before our children, not simply share it with them. This four-session study brings us back to basic truths and helps you grapple with how to teach children biblical values such as sacrifice, generosity, and stewardship in an age of abundance.

4. Women Leaders Bible Study Bundle

Serve God and lead others out of your calling.

13 Session Bible Study

Leadership is fulfilling and demanding. Sometimes, you may feel pulled in 20 different directions, and you can't remember the last time you could truly rest. In this bundle, you have the opportunity to focus on caring for your soul, learn how best to use your spiritual gifts, and connect with God so you can help others do the same.

5. 9-Month Parenting Track

Nine months of Bible studies for parents.

38 Session Bible Study

What task is more difficult than parenting? And what could be more important? Why not take 9 months to explore what the Bible has to say about this all-consuming task?

We've assembled a useful mix of studies that looks at raising Christ-centered children, examines how to discipline them, and addresses materialism and sex. We also give you tools to decide what is best for your child's education and to think through divorce, adoption, special needs, and how to deal with parental guilt.

6. Drawing the Line

This six-session study helps parents discuss ground rules, expectations, responsibility, and more.
6 Session Bible Study

Parenting raises a lot of questions. We want to raise responsible, respectful, and successful children, but we're not sure how to do that. How can we avoid raising children who feel they can never quite measure up? How does rescuing our children from the consequences of their choices and behaviors undermine discipline? What roles, if any, do negotiation and compromise play in discipline? Should we require our kids to do chores, and how do we do that? How do we prepare them (and ourselves!) for their adolescence? This six-session study will explore these practical, crucial questions.

7. Women's Bible Study Bundle

Embrace your identity in Christ and live out your calling.
19 Session Bible Study

When life gets busy and we feel overwhelmed, our connection to God is often the first thing we forget to tend. We may try to muscle through our weak times, but we quickly discover it's impossible to succeed this way. The best thing we can do is find our rest and our identity in God. He will provide us with strength, balance, support, and peace. This collection of Bible studies explores each of these gifts from God.

8. The Myth of the Perfect Parent

Why faithfulness—not perfection—must be the goal in raising our children.
Single Session Bible Study

The Internet and social media have made it easy for us to peek into hundreds of other people's lives every day. Award-worthy after school snacks and Pinterest-perfect birthday parties can feel like normal expectations for parents and lead us to believe the perfect parent exists. In this Bible study, you'll unpack the myth of the perfect parent and learn what how to have healthy expectations for parenting.

9. Thriving in the Empty Nest

These studies will help the transition from a full house to an empty nest.
3 Session Bible Study

Graduation day and the start of college may be quickly approaching for the youngest child in your household. When the kids leave home, it is a time of transition. It can be sad, but it doesn't have to be devastating. In fact, it can be a time to grow as a person and find new meaning. You could see it as a time to thrive as never before. This three-session study will help you prepare for this season of your life.

10. Raising Christ-Centered Children

Gain a Christian perspective on a tough job.
6 Session Bible Study

Parenting is not an easy job. Helping children grow and develop the skills they need to be a balanced adult is a demanding task. Even more daunting is teaching kids to live with a Christian perspective and make God the center of their choices. The good news is, you don't have to try to make this happen on your own. From learning to discipline with love, to facing the teenager years, to staying united with your spouse in the midst of parenting, this Bible study will provide support and insight that will equip you as you help your children walk with God.

Small Group Discussion: 20 minutes

- Discuss "sacred pathways" and if you were able to identify your children.
- After reviewing all this info discuss with your group and commit to YOUR next step plan.
- Discuss your concerns and obstacles around your next steps. What will help make this a reality?

Small Group Wrap-Up: 10 minutes

- What were the biggest take-aways and personal commitment from your small group time?
- What is ONE thing that you will do different this week in order to make needed changes that came up in today's study?

Discuss This Week's Homework: 5 minutes

- Make a commitment to each other to do a season of these personal Bible studies. Discuss HOW to make these a reality for your home!
- Consider starting NEXT week!
- Focus on the LIFE Journaling Method and it will give you more insights on how YOU are equipped to use the Bible as the guide for your family.