THE PARENTING TABLE · JESUS & PARENTING

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Help parents follow Jesus, not perform for a group.

Preparation, a minute-by-minute plan, opening and follow-up questions, closing words, and session-by-session guidance. No counseling qualification is implied.

New here? Choose one session. Read its Scripture and teaching together; take turns with the questions. Each person writes one small thing they will try and when. Pray and agree when to meet again. Next time, return to that written step: what did I try, and how did it go? At your first meeting, skip this check-in. If a step is untried, begin again without a score. Each person keeps their own notes and chooses what to share.

Abide. Become. Be Sent.

A free discipleship resource from MSSNL.
For individual parents, couples, mentors, and small groups.
mssnl.org/table/parenting

Your role at the table.

Prepare carefully. Listen well. Point to Jesus.

Read each chapter before leading. You are a fellow parent and facilitator, not a judge, a counselor, or an investigator. Ask open questions, make room for silence, and keep discussion about each person's own heart.

- Never collect, photograph, or read participants' private notes.
- Never promise absolute secrecy. Safety and legal reporting come first.
- Welcome everyday family examples. Keep the focus on the parent's learning, and gently move sensitive family matters to a private conversation.
- Never press anyone to share, to confess, or to report on a child's behavior.
- If a child's safety is at risk, seek qualified professional help promptly and follow local reporting requirements. Do not investigate or confront. In an emergency, contact local emergency services.
- You are a fellow parent and facilitator, not a counselor. Point people to qualified help.

> **Children's safety comes first**
>
> Follow Jesus with patience, kindness, and care for the children entrusted to you. This is a discipleship resource, not counseling, therapy, or legal advice. Share only what you choose, and respect each family's privacy. If you are concerned about a child's safety or well-being, seek help promptly from a qualified professional. In an emergency, contact local emergency services.

Your first meeting.

At your first meeting, skip this check-in and ask what each person hopes to learn. Before closing, show everyone the My next step box. Each parent writes one small thing to try and when they will try it. For example: I will put my phone away and listen for five minutes after dinner on three evenings. Next time, begin by returning to that note and asking how it went.

What to say first (read aloud)

Welcome. We are here to follow Jesus and grow as parents, not to compare families. We will read Scripture, talk about what we are learning, and choose one small step to try at home. Listen with kindness, share only what you choose, and respect each family's privacy. Personal stories stay within the group, except when safety or the law requires help. This group offers discipleship and encouragement, not professional counseling. If you need more support, we can talk privately afterward.

Before people arrive

Choose a quiet room. Bring the safety statement, contact details for qualified professionals and local emergency services, and copies of the participant workbook. Do not bring a sign-in sheet that records children's names. Talk naturally about family life, while respecting your child's privacy. Share what you are learning as a parent; leave sensitive stories and personal details out of group discussions and saved notes. Nobody needs to share more than they choose.

A meeting from start to finish.

Plan about 75 to 90 minutes. Use the times as a guide.

1. **Welcome and pray · 8 minutes.** Welcome everyone and pray briefly. Agree to listen kindly, respect family privacy, and let anyone pass. At the first meeting, explain the limits of confidentiality and where to find help.
2. **Last time: how did it go? · 10 minutes.** Skip this at the first meeting. Later, invite everyone to find the My next step box from their previous session. Use the follow-up questions below; everyone may pass.
3. **Opening question · 10 minutes.** Ask the session's opening question. Everyone answers in a sentence or passes.
4. **Read and reflect alone · 10 minutes.** Read the Scripture aloud. Each person quietly writes their own answers. Nobody shares these papers.
5. **Pair or group talk · 20 to 30 minutes.** Pairs take turns with the pair prompt. Then bring everyone back for the optional group sharing question.
6. **Choose your next step · 7 minutes.** Read the session's suggested practice. Give everyone time to write one small step and when they will try it in their own My next step box. This becomes the step they check in on next time. Anyone may pass.
7. **Close · 5 minutes.** Say the closing words, pray, and remind everyone about help resources.

Opening question

Each session page gives you an actual opening question. Ask it exactly as written, then wait. Silence is fine.

Following up on last time.

From the second meeting on, begin with an optional check-in on last meeting's personal action. Ask these questions, one at a time.

1. Look at the My next step box from your previous session. What did you plan to try, and how did it go? You may pass.
2. What did you notice about yourself, not your child, when you tried it?
3. What got in the way? There is no wrong answer, and nothing to prove.
4. If you did not try it, that is fine. What would make it easier this week?

Give people a quiet moment to find their own note first. Let each willing person briefly describe their step and how it went; do not require an answer to every question from everyone. If someone has no note, missed a meeting, or did not try a step, say: You can begin here today. There is no catch-up test. Do not ask for proof, compare people, or ask what a child did or said. Thank them for sharing. Offer advice only when invited.

How to close (read aloud)

Thank you for being here and for encouraging one another. Your notes are yours to keep. Before you go, choose one small way to put today's teaching into practice. If you need support, you are welcome to speak with me privately afterward. Let us pray.

Make the next step clear.

Your next step is one small way you will put this session's teaching into practice before you meet again. Choose something you can do yourself. Write what you will try and when in the My next step box.

> Example: Before our next session, I will put my phone away and listen for five minutes on three evenings.

1. Choose: use the session's suggested practice to pick one small thing you can do. You may adapt it or pass.
2. Write: in the My next step box, say what you will try and when. Be specific, such as on three evenings before our next session.
3. Try: practice it in everyday life between sessions. Notice what you are learning about following Jesus as a parent.
4. Last time: at the next session, read that same note and reflect on how it went. Share only if you wish.
5. Continue: keep the step, make it smaller, or choose a new step after today's discussion. End with prayer.

If you did not choose a step, missed a meeting, or did not try it, say not yet or pass. You can try it again, make it smaller, or choose a different step. There is no score and no catch-up test.

Show the connection

At the end of each session, point participants to their My next step box. Let them write in private. Next time, ask them to open that same box; do not collect or inspect their answers.

Example of a last-time check-in: I tried listening on two evenings. I noticed I was less distracted. Next time I will leave my phone in another room. Keep the focus on the parent's own choices, not a child's response.

For your first meeting, skip this check-in. For the final meeting, invite parents to keep practicing with a trusted person or privately; another group meeting is not required.

Choose a way to meet.

One parent, or parents together

- Set aside about 40 to 60 minutes and put distractions away. If you have just had a hard moment with a child, take a little time to settle before you begin.
- Read the chapter and the session page by yourself first. Start with your own heart before you think about your child.
- Write your own answers. They are private. The questions are about you as a parent, not about fixing your child.
- If you parent with someone else and it is safe to do so, take turns. One speaks while the other listens, then switch. Either of you may pass. Never use a session to blame the other parent.
- Choose one small step that you will take before the next session. Write what and when in the My next step box. At your next session, return to that note and reflect on how it went. Skip this check-in at your first session.
- Close with the prayer, aloud or silently. Do not use prayer to lecture a child or the other parent.

As a mentor or small group

- A mentor or small group meets every one or two weeks for 60 to 90 minutes. Groups of three to eight parents work well. Each person keeps their own notes. Nobody hands in papers.
- Begin with a short prayer. Agree to listen kindly, let anyone pass, and keep personal stories within the group. Explain that confidentiality has limits when someone's safety or the law requires help.
- Each person reflects alone for a few minutes. Then the group talks about one question at a time. Everyone may pass.
- Share everyday examples that help explain what you are learning as a parent. Leave sensitive family matters for a private conversation with someone who can help.
- Facilitators never ask for a report on a child, never press for details, and never collect notes. Redirect gossip or complaints about a child or another parent.
- Close with one next step per person and a prayer. Each person writes what they will try and when in their own My next step box. At the next meeting, invite a brief check-in on last time; skip it at the first meeting. If a child's safety is a concern, seek qualified professional help promptly and follow local reporting requirements.

Share only what you choose. Nothing in this tool is shared automatically with your spouse, mentor, facilitator, or group. Keep saved notes focused on your own learning and next steps, rather than sensitive information about your family.

Your session guide.

Go at a pace that leaves room to practice. Read the book alongside this workbook. The following page numbers lead to each session's teaching.

1. Introduction: Entrusted · **page 9**
2. Chapter 1: Live It Before You Lead It · **page 11**
3. Chapter 2: Children Are Received · **page 13**
4. Chapter 3: The Way of Honor · **page 15**
5. Chapter 4: Four Words That Form a Child · **page 17**
6. Chapter 5: Four Paths to Wisdom · **page 19**
7. Chapter 6: Correction That Leads Somewhere · **page 21**
8. Chapter 7: Discipline That Ends in Restoration · **page 23**
9. Chapter 8: Prepare Before the Moment · **page 25**
10. Chapter 9: Teach Them Who God Is · **page 27**
11. Chapter 10: Tell Them Who They Are · **page 29**
12. Chapter 11: Prepare Them for When · **page 31**
13. Chapter 12: Clothe Them in the Armor of God · **page 33**
14. Conclusion: Release Them to Jesus · **page 35**

Free book, audiobook, and EPUB: mssnl.org/jesus-and-parenting

Introduction: Entrusted

Preparation: Read the Introduction, Entrusted.

Keep this teaching central

A child changes the shape of a life. Children depend on others for food, shelter, protection, direction, comfort, and truth. The book says our children have been entrusted to us. A heritage is something we receive. It has value before we add anything to it. Your child bears the image of God before they earn a grade, win a game, or do anything the world can measure. Jesus welcomed children when his own disciples tried to push them away. He made room for them and gave them his attention. That picture sits at the heart of Christian parenting. We also have limits. We cannot become Jesus for our children. We cannot force faith into their hearts or promise every choice will be wise. So we teach, correct, protect, and pray with open hands. Faithful parenting begins with following Jesus, and then inviting our children to walk with us. Entrusted never means owned. A child is a person to protect and love, never a person to control, hurt, or use.

Read Scripture in context

Psalm 127:3 calls children a heritage from the Lord. Genesis 1:27 says God made people in his own image, so a child has worth before they do anything. Mark 10:14 records Jesus saying, let the children come to me and do not hinder them. Mark 10 also says he took the children in his arms and blessed them.

Guide without taking over.

Begin here: First meeting: there is no previous step to follow up on. Skip this check-in.

Session-specific guidance

Facilitators: welcome each parent and explain the meeting's simple flow: read, reflect, discuss, choose a step, and pray. Agree to listen kindly, respect family privacy, and let anyone pass. There is no earlier step to discuss at this first meeting. Explain the limits of group support and confidentiality; offer a private conversation afterward if someone needs help.

Opening question

Say your first name and finish this sentence: One word that describes what I feel about being a parent right now is...

Pair conversation

Turn to the person next to you. Take turns: What do I hope to get from these sessions? What would help me feel comfortable learning here?

Optional group sharing

Share one way you hope to grow as a parent. You can pass.

> **Facilitator guidance**
>
> Keep introductions warm and simple. Ask what each parent hopes to learn, rather than asking for sensitive family stories. Explain that there is no previous step to discuss yet.

Practice and pray

Before you read any further, write one sentence that begins, I am thankful that God gave me a child who... Say a short prayer of thanks over it. Then name one way you want to follow Jesus more closely as a parent.

Before closing: Give each person time to write one thing they will try and when in their My next step box, or pass. This is the step to follow up on next time. Pray the participant workbook's session prayer together or in your own words. Do not collect worksheets.

Chapter 1: Live It Before You Lead It

Preparation: Read Chapter 1, Live It Before You Lead It.

Keep this teaching central

Children learn long before they know they are learning. They watch how we talk about our bodies, our work, our spouse, and other people. They watch how we handle stress and what we do when we are wrong. The book says parents do not need to be perfect. When a parent fails, the best thing to do is come back and say, I was wrong, I should not have spoken that way, will you forgive me? An apology matters, but it does not erase a harmful pattern. A parent who keeps losing control of their anger needs wise help, new habits, and support from others. Words matter too. Sarcasm, constant criticism, and public embarrassment teach children that people are not safe. Gratitude for how God made us teaches something better. The book's call is simple: live what you want to multiply, and let your children watch you follow Jesus.

Read Scripture in context

Luke 6:40 says a student who is fully trained will be like their teacher. 1 Corinthians 11:1 says, be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. Luke 6:45 says the mouth speaks from the fullness of the heart. Psalm 139:14 says we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Ephesians 4:29 calls us to speak words that build up and give grace.

Guide without taking over.

Begin here: Invite parents to open session 1's My next step box in their own workbook. Ask: What did you try, and how did it go? Anyone may pass.

Session-specific guidance

Facilitators: keep this about each parent's own example. Do not let anyone use another person's failure as a story. Make the apology point clear: saying sorry is not a free pass for harmful behavior. If someone says they fear their own anger, listen kindly and point to a counselor, pastor, or parenting helpline in private after the meeting.

Opening question

What is one habit you hope your child copies from you? What is one you hope they do not?

Pair conversation

Take turns: when did I last say sorry to a child, and what did I want to say but did not?

Optional group sharing

What is one change in your own example you want to try? Speak about yourself only.

> **Facilitator guidance**
>
> Do not let anyone use another person's failure as a story. Redirect any talk about a spouse or ex. Watch for parents who fear their own anger.

Practice and pray

This week, notice one moment when you could model honesty, patience, or kindness on purpose. If you speak harshly, go back later and say a short, honest sorry. If a pattern keeps happening, tell a trusted adult or professional that you want help.

Before closing: Give each person time to write one thing they will try and when in their My next step box, or pass. This is the step to follow up on next time. Pray the participant workbook's session prayer together or in your own words. Do not collect worksheets.

Chapter 2: Children Are Received

Preparation: Read Chapter 2, Children Are Received.

Keep this teaching central

A child is known by God before a parent fully knows that child. So parenting is stewardship. A steward cares well for something that belongs to someone else. Children belong first to God. Hannah is the picture: she received Samuel with thanks and gave him back to the Lord. Possessive parents begin to treat a child's choices as a report card on themselves. That puts a heavy and unfair weight on the child. Children are not blank pages. Each one comes with a different personality, strengths, and struggles, so parents learn each child with careful attention. A child can lie without becoming a liar for life. Labels like difficult or lazy can stick. Children also grow in stages. A four-year-old and a fourteen-year-old need different kinds of instruction. Parents begin with outside rules and slowly help a child build inside responsibility. Control can feel safer, but control alone does not make a faithful heart. Let children do small things for themselves. Measure success by character, not just grades and trophies. And keep open hands about your hopes for them.

Read Scripture in context

Psalm 139:13 says God formed us in the womb. Psalm 24:1 says the earth and everyone in it belong to the Lord. 1 Samuel 1:27 records Hannah saying the Lord gave her what she asked for. Luke 2:52 says Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature. Luke 16:10 says whoever is faithful in a little will be faithful in much. Mark 8:36 asks what it profits a person to gain the whole world and lose their soul.

Guide without taking over.

Begin here: Invite parents to open session 2's My next step box in their own workbook. Ask: What did you try, and how did it go? Anyone may pass.

Session-specific guidance

Facilitators: keep stories general and unnamed. Avoid any competition about whose child is doing better. If someone speaks of a child in contemptuous or hopeless terms, gently ask what the child might be carrying, and invite the parent to name one strength. Do not give diagnoses or advice about special needs; point to a doctor or school team.

Opening question

What is one quality in your child that you are thankful for?

Pair conversation

Take turns: what label do I use about my child, and what is a truer word?

Optional group sharing

What is one hope you are learning to hold with open hands?

> **Facilitator guidance**
>
> Help parents appreciate each child's gifts without ranking or comparing children. Questions about a child's development may need support from a qualified professional or the school team.

Practice and pray

Pick one small job your child can learn to do for themselves, and teach it step by step with patience. Also write down one strength you see in your child and tell them about it this week in a specific way.

Before closing: Give each person time to write one thing they will try and when in their My next step box, or pass. This is the step to follow up on next time. Pray the participant workbook's session prayer together or in your own words. Do not collect worksheets.

Chapter 3: The Way of Honor

Preparation: Read Chapter 3, The Way of Honor.

Keep this teaching central

Honor goes deeper than obedience. Obedience is what a child does. Honor also includes the attitude and the way a child speaks. A child may say, fine, but make it clear they are not happy. Children need help to learn what an honoring answer sounds like. Disagreement is allowed. A child can say, may I tell you what I think? and say it with respect. Parents should want children who can think, ask questions, and tell the truth. The book is also very clear about safety. Honor never means a child must obey a sinful or unsafe instruction. Children should know they can tell when something is wrong. If someone hurts them, frightens them, crosses a boundary, or tells them to keep a secret about harm, they need to know that telling the truth is right and necessary. Godly authority does not fear the truth and does not need secrecy. Parents should also guess what may be under a hard response: tiredness, hurt, confusion, or fear. Correction should not begin with a wounded ego. Notice honor when you see it, and say so. Parental authority is for a season, and our goal is to prepare children to live under Jesus.

Read Scripture in context

Exodus 20:12 says, honor your father and your mother. Ephesians 6:2 repeats it and calls it the first commandment with a promise. Proverbs 15:33 links the fear of the Lord with humility and honor. James 1:19 says to be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger. Luke 2:51 says Jesus went home with his parents and was obedient to them. Matthew 20:26 teaches that greatness in God's kingdom comes through serving.

Guide without taking over.

Begin here: Invite parents to open session 3's My next step box in their own workbook. Ask: What did you try, and how did it go? Anyone may pass.

Session-specific guidance

Facilitators: connect honor with the example of Jesus: humble service, careful listening, and truthfulness. Help parents model respectful disagreement and welcome honest questions. Children should know they can speak to a trusted adult when something concerns them. If a child's safety is at risk, follow local reporting requirements and seek qualified help promptly.

Opening question

When you were a child, how did an adult show you respect or disrespect? Share only what you wish. You can pass.

Pair conversation

Take turns: what does my child need to hear from me about telling me when something is wrong?

Optional group sharing

What is one way you could make your home a safer place to tell the truth?

> **Facilitator guidance**
>
> Connect honor with humble service and truthful conversation. If a child's safety is a concern, seek qualified professional help promptly and follow local reporting requirements.

Practice and pray

Say one clear sentence to your child this week: you can always tell me if something is wrong, even if someone told you to keep it a secret. Also catch your child doing something honoring and tell them exactly what you saw.

Before closing: Give each person time to write one thing they will try and when in their My next step box, or pass. This is the step to follow up on next time. Pray the participant workbook's session prayer together or in your own words. Do not collect worksheets.

Chapter 4: Four Words That Form a Child

Preparation: Read Chapter 4, Four Words That Form a Child: obey, self-control, honor, and patience.

Keep this teaching central

Four words deserve a place in the language of a Christian home: obey, self-control, honor, and patience. They are simple enough for a young child and wise enough to last a lifetime. Obey means responding to rightful authority and learning to trust. Children need clear expectations, loving guidance, and the freedom to tell a trusted adult when something concerns them. Self-control means learning to express strong feelings with respectful words and actions. You can say, you are angry because the game did not go your way, and still hold the line. Self-control is best taught by practicing it ourselves. A calm response helps a child learn what calm looks like. The adult carries more responsibility. Honor means doing it with a respectful heart, and a calm, short phrase like, try that again with honor, can help. Patience means learning to wait, take a turn, and overlook small offenses. These words grow slowly. Children will fail, and parents can respond with patience, hold a clear boundary, and help them try again. Good behavior alone is not the gospel. A child can look impressive and still need Jesus.

Read Scripture in context

Colossians 3:20 speaks of children obeying their parents. John 6:38 records Jesus saying he came to do the will of the one who sent him. Galatians 5:22-23 lists self-control in the fruit of the Spirit. Proverbs 25:28 compares a person without self-control to a city with broken walls. Ephesians 4:26 says, be angry and do not sin. Matthew 23:12 says those who humble themselves will be lifted up. Proverbs 19:11 praises slowness to anger. Romans 8:25 speaks of waiting with patience. Psalm 103:8 says the Lord is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and full of steadfast love.

Guide without taking over.

Begin here: Invite parents to open session 4's My next step box in their own workbook. Ask: What did you try, and how did it go? Anyone may pass.

Session-specific guidance

Facilitators: keep the conversation on the parent's own growth in obedience, self-control, honor, and patience. Invite one everyday example of a calm response or a clear expectation. If a parent needs extra support, offer a private conversation and help them connect with a pastor, counselor, or parenting professional.

Opening question

Which of the four words (obey, self-control, honor, patience) is hardest for you as a parent?

Pair conversation

Take turns: what happens in me when I lose my temper, and what could I do instead?

Optional group sharing

What is one way you could teach one of the four words calmly? Share only your own idea.

> **Facilitator guidance**
>
> Focus on the parent's example, calm responses, and clear expectations. Offer a private conversation and qualified support when needed.

Practice and pray

Choose one of the four words. Teach it calmly at a time when nobody is upset. Practice one small example together, and notice it when your child uses it. If you lose your temper, take a short break before you say anything else.

Before closing: Give each person time to write one thing they will try and when in their My next step box, or pass. This is the step to follow up on next time. Pray the participant workbook's session prayer together or in your own words. Do not collect worksheets.

Chapter 5: Four Paths to Wisdom

Preparation: Read Chapter 5, Four Paths to Wisdom.

Keep this teaching central

Every parent wants a child who can make wise choices. Wisdom starts with respect for God and grows over time through teaching, experience, correction, and example. The book names four paths. First, think before speaking, plan more, and prepare earlier. A pause can protect a relationship from words you cannot take back, and a packed backpack the night before lowers stress. Second, slow down, learn to listen, and consider others. A child learns to hear another person out before they answer. Third, learn to say no, toughen up, and act now. The book is careful here. Toughen up never means ignore pain, bury feelings, pretend you are fine, or put up with harmful treatment. It means a child can say a wise no to a harmful invitation, finish a hard task, and tell a trusted adult when something is wrong. Parents should not remove every disappointment. They must step in when safety or serious harm is involved. Fourth, loosen up and open up. A home needs play, laughter, thanks, and honest talk. Planning without room for flexibility becomes control, and strength without joy turns hard.

Read Scripture in context

Proverbs 9:10 says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Proverbs 16:23 says the wise heart makes speech wise. Luke 14:28 has Jesus asking who builds a tower without first counting the cost. The chapter also draws on wisdom teaching about listening and about joy in the home.

Guide without taking over.

Begin here: Invite parents to open session 5's My next step box in their own workbook. Ask: What did you try, and how did it go? Anyone may pass.

Session-specific guidance

Facilitators: explain resilience as learning to meet age-appropriate challenges with steady support. Keep stories general. Invite parents to choose one small practice that fits their child's stage of growth, rather than a whole new system.

Opening question

Tell the group about a time you felt truly listened to. Share only what you choose.

Pair conversation

Take turns: which of the four paths do I need most help with, and what is one small step?

Optional group sharing

What is one thing that brings joy in your home? Name it in general terms.

> **Facilitator guidance**
>
> Keep challenges age-appropriate and pair them with encouragement, listening, and practical support.

Practice and pray

Choose one path to practice with your child. For example, prepare one thing the night before, practice a calm pause, or role-play saying a kind but firm no. Plan one simple fun thing for the family this week.

Before closing: Give each person time to write one thing they will try and when in their My next step box, or pass. This is the step to follow up on next time. Pray the participant workbook's session prayer together or in your own words. Do not collect worksheets.

Chapter 6: Correction That Leads Somewhere

Preparation: Read Chapter 6, Correction That Leads Somewhere: Positive Direction and the IDEAL Response.

Keep this teaching central

Every parent corrects. The question is what the correction produces. Many homes fill up with, stop that, quit it, and how many times have I told you. The book offers Positive Direction first. A parent teaches a better response (this is how we handle this), lets the child practice it, and then notices and encourages it when it shows up on an ordinary day. Encouragement is sincere and specific, not empty praise. The IDEAL Response then helps when behavior must be addressed. It stands for Immediate, Direct, Even, Actionable, and Loving. Immediate means respond while the link between action and correction is clear, but a short pause is fine when you are too upset: I need a moment first. Direct means go to the child, get their attention, and ask, what happened? Even means a steady, calm tone. Actionable means the child learns what to do next and gets to practice it. Loving means the child stays secure in the relationship. Correction may include a calm consequence or making things right. Keep your words clear, your expectations fair, and your love steady. Respect a child's need for a little space before closeness returns.

Read Scripture in context

Proverbs 16:21 says the wise of heart is called discerning and sweet speech increases persuasion. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says to encourage one another and build one another up. Ephesians 4:26 says, be angry and do not sin, and do not let the sun go down on your anger. John 1:14 speaks of Jesus as full of grace and truth. Ephesians 6:4 tells fathers not to provoke their children to anger.

Guide without taking over.

Begin here: Invite parents to open session 6's My next step box in their own workbook. Ask: What did you try, and how did it go? Anyone may pass.

Session-specific guidance

Facilitators: walk through Positive Direction and the IDEAL Response with a simple everyday example. Keep the focus on calm words, clear expectations, practice, and fair consequences. Help each parent choose one response they can practice this week. Offer a private conversation and qualified support when someone needs more help than the group can provide.

Opening question

Name something that helps you stay calm when a child frustrates you.

Pair conversation

Take turns: which letter of IDEAL do I find hardest, and what could my pause plan be?

Optional group sharing

What is one sentence you could say to show a child a better response? Share only your own sentence.

> **Facilitator guidance**
>
> Use everyday examples of calm correction, practice, and encouragement. If a child's safety is at risk, follow local reporting requirements and seek qualified help promptly.

Practice and pray

Pick one repeated problem. Write a short, calm sentence that shows the better response. Practice it with your child when things are calm. Then notice and encourage it once a day for a week. Make a pause plan for yourself: breathe, step away for a minute, then return.

Before closing: Give each person time to write one thing they will try and when in their My next step box, or pass. This is the step to follow up on next time. Pray the participant workbook's session prayer together or in your own words. Do not collect worksheets.

Chapter 7: Discipline That Ends in Restoration

Preparation: Read Chapter 7, Discipline That Ends in Restoration.

Keep this teaching central

Correction should have an ending, and discipline should lead toward restoration. The book names three movements: accountability, encouragement, and forgiveness. Accountability tells the truth about what was wrong in specific words, such as, you lied about where you were. It is not the same as shame. Accountability says a choice was wrong. Shame says you are the problem. A child learns that truth is safer than hiding. Encouragement keeps hope alive. It says, I believe you can do better, and it does not pretend the wrong was fine. Forgiveness is learned by seeking it and giving it. A child can ask, will you forgive me? And parents must ask this too. Forgiveness does not always remove every consequence, and children should not be pushed to pretend that serious harm is gone. Where abuse, violence, coercion, or other serious harm is involved, protection comes first. Forgiveness never asks a child to stay in danger, hide wrongdoing, or go back to an unsafe place. Do not end the process too early, and do not drag it out. When it is finished, let the moment end. Discipline that is humiliating, painful, or cruel has no place in this book's picture of restoration.

Read Scripture in context

Hebrews 12:11 says discipline seems painful at the time but later produces the fruit of righteousness. Proverbs 28:13 says whoever hides sin will not prosper, but one who confesses and turns from it will find mercy. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says to encourage one another. Ephesians 6:4 says to bring children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord and not to provoke them to anger. Ephesians 4:32 says to be kind and forgiving as God in Christ forgave you. 1 John 1:9 says if we confess our sins he is faithful to forgive.

Guide without taking over.

Begin here: Invite parents to open session 7's My next step box in their own workbook. Ask: What did you try, and how did it go? Anyone may pass.

Session-specific guidance

Facilitators: help parents connect accountability, encouragement, and forgiveness with an everyday example. Restoration takes patience; allow time for trust to grow. Keep the child's well-being central. If a child's safety is a concern, follow local reporting requirements and seek qualified help promptly.

Opening question

Think of one time you ended a hard moment well. What helped? No names or details are needed.

Pair conversation

Take turns: what do I say when I want my child to see that a choice was wrong, and what do I say to give them hope?

Optional group sharing

How might you end a correction with warmth? Share only a short idea.

> **Facilitator guidance**
>
> Forgiveness never means a child must stay near someone who harms them. If a parent discloses harmful discipline, follow reporting duties, do not promise secrecy.

Practice and pray

The next time a correction is needed, follow the three steps: say clearly what was wrong, say one thing that gives hope, and offer or ask for forgiveness. Then let the moment end. If you feel you went too far, go back and make it right.

Before closing: Give each person time to write one thing they will try and when in their My next step box, or pass. This is the step to follow up on next time. Pray the participant workbook's session prayer together or in your own words. Do not collect worksheets.

Chapter 8: Prepare Before the Moment

Preparation: Read Chapter 8, Prepare Before the Moment, including the Five-Minute Warning.

Keep this teaching central

Some of the hardest parenting moments begin before anyone knows. A child walks into a store tired. A family arrives at a gathering with no talk of what is expected. Screen time ends suddenly. Then pressure comes, the child reacts, the parent reacts, and everyone is upset. Parents need to know how to correct, but also how to prepare. Preparation has simple steps. Talk about what is coming and what is expected. Check for understanding by asking, tell me what you need to remember when we go inside. Then make connection before action: get close, make eye contact, and give your child real attention. The Five-Minute Warning is one example. Before an activity ends, say calmly, we have five minutes before we put this away and get ready for bed. Keep your word. If five minutes keeps turning into more minutes, the warning teaches that complaining works. Not every moment allows notice, and emergencies happen. Jesus prepared his disciples for what was ahead, even for Peter's failure, and spoke hope about his future. Preparation also includes safety talks: which adults are safe, how to ask for help, and what to do when something feels wrong.

Read Scripture in context

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 tells parents to keep God's words on their hearts and teach them diligently to their children. Proverbs 22:3 says the prudent see danger and hide, but the simple go on and suffer. Luke 22:31-32 records Jesus telling Peter that Satan had asked to sift him, and that Jesus had prayed for him. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says there is a time for everything.

Guide without taking over.

Begin here: Invite parents to open session 8's My next step box in their own workbook. Ask: What did you try, and how did it go? Anyone may pass.

Session-specific guidance

Facilitators: practical routines are the focus. Do not let this become a contest of schedules. Invite each person to choose just one moment. For the safe adults conversation, remind everyone that child safety talks should be calm and age-appropriate, and offer local child safety resources, without asking anyone to describe a child's experiences.

Opening question

What is one daily moment that goes badly in your home? Keep it general.

Pair conversation

Take turns: how could I prepare my child before that moment, and what will I say?

Optional group sharing

What is one way to check that a child understood? Share your idea.

> **Facilitator guidance**
>
> Keep the focus on routines, not on contests. For safe adults talk, share child safety resources without asking about any child's experiences.

Practice and pray

Choose one hard daily moment, like leaving the house, bedtime, or screen time ending. Prepare ahead: talk it through, ask your child to tell you what they remember, and then use a calm Five-Minute Warning. Keep your word. Also pick a calm time to ask, who are the grown-ups you could talk to if something felt wrong?

Before closing: Give each person time to write one thing they will try and when in their My next step box, or pass. This is the step to follow up on next time. Pray the participant workbook's session prayer together or in your own words. Do not collect worksheets.

Chapter 9: Teach Them Who God Is

Preparation: Read Chapter 9, Teach Them Who God Is: six truths and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Keep this teaching central

Parents cannot give a child saving faith or produce spiritual life in them. They can teach what is true, answer questions honestly, open Scripture together, and show what it looks like to follow Jesus. The book names six truths to teach. One, God is good. Two, God loves them, and his love is shown most clearly in Jesus. Three, God made them on purpose. Four, God's Word is true. Five, God hears when his people pray. Prayer is not a way to force God to do what we want. It is how we come to him. Six, Jesus is the only way to the Father. The chapter also teaches about the Holy Spirit, who helps believers understand Scripture, resist sin, and grow. We should not tell every child automatically that the Spirit lives in them. The Spirit is for those who trust Jesus. Also, not every strong feeling is the Spirit's leading. Parents must also keep God's name separate from fear and control. A child should never be told that God is angry at them to make them behave. Because God is good and loving, a child can bring questions, fears, and failures to him.

Read Scripture in context

The chapter draws on Scripture about God's goodness, love, and word. Prayer is shown as a gift. Jesus says in John 14:6 that he is the way, the truth, and the life. 1 Corinthians 6:19 says the body of a believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Psalm 139 shows God making and knowing us.

Guide without taking over.

Begin here: Invite parents to open session 9's My next step box in their own workbook. Ask: What did you try, and how did it go? Anyone may pass.

Session-specific guidance

Facilitators: parents come from different church backgrounds. Keep to the book's six truths and do not argue about secondary doctrines. Never allow anyone to use God's name to frighten a child into compliance. Do not ask anyone to report on a child's spiritual condition. If a parent grieves a child's doubts, listen and do not offer quick answers.

Opening question

Where did you first learn what God is like? Share only what you wish.

Pair conversation

Take turns: which of the six truths about God do I most want my child to hear, and how will I say it simply?

Optional group sharing

What is one way you pray with a child or hope to? Share briefly.

> **Facilitator guidance**
>
> Do not argue secondary doctrines. Do not allow any use of God's name to frighten a child. Do not ask anyone to report on a child's faith.

Practice and pray

Pick one of the six truths. Say it in plain words to your child in a calm moment, with a short Bible verse or story. Pray a short, honest prayer with them, and let them speak too if they want to.

Before closing: Give each person time to write one thing they will try and when in their My next step box, or pass. This is the step to follow up on next time. Pray the participant workbook's session prayer together or in your own words. Do not collect worksheets.

Chapter 10: Tell Them Who They Are

Preparation: Read Chapter 10, Tell Them Who They Are.

Keep this teaching central

Every child is learning a story about themselves. They ask without words: am I valuable, do I belong, is something wrong with me, do I have what it takes? Parents' words carry great weight. Children learn from what we say about them and about ourselves. The book roots identity in Genesis: every child bears God's image, and that dignity comes before any achievement. Children grow up surrounded by messages about appearance, so parents can speak of food as a gift, movement as something to be thankful for, and rest as care. Beauty is not evil, but it cannot carry a person's worth. A father who measures himself by income and winning can teach his son that manhood must be proven. A husband who speaks about his wife with gratitude teaches sons and daughters how people should be honored. Even good labels, like the responsible one, can become a burden. The book also keeps two truths apart: every child has dignity as someone made by God, and a child becomes a child of God through faith in Jesus. Do not blur them. Tell your child who they are in a way that is true, warm, and specific.

Read Scripture in context

Proverbs 18:21 says death and life are in the power of the tongue. Luke 6:45 says the mouth speaks from the heart. Psalm 139:14 praises God for making us wonderfully. Genesis 1:27 says God made people in his image. Proverbs 31:30 says charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. John 1:12 says to all who received Jesus he gave the right to become children of God. Colossians 3:3 says your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Guide without taking over.

Begin here: Invite parents to open session 10's My next step box in their own workbook. Ask: What did you try, and how did it go? Anyone may pass.

Session-specific guidance

Facilitators: this session can bring up body image, shame, and old wounds from a parent's own childhood. Do not ask anyone to disclose. Allow silence. Keep the focus on one gentle practice. If someone shares signs of an eating or self-harm concern about a child, do not give treatment advice; urge prompt help from a doctor or qualified professional, and in a crisis call emergency services.

Opening question

What is one thing someone said about you as a child that stuck with you, for good? You can pass.

Pair conversation

Take turns: what true, specific thing can I say to my child about who they are?

Optional group sharing

What is one thing you will say about yourself in a grateful, true way?

> **Facilitator guidance**
>
> Do not ask anyone to disclose old wounds. Allow silence. If someone mentions concern about a child's eating, mood, or self-harm, urge prompt qualified help, and call emergency services in a crisis.

Practice and pray

Choose one true thing about your child's character, not appearance or performance, and say it clearly this week, ideally at a calm time like bedtime. Also notice one thing you say about yourself and change it to something grateful and true.

Before closing: Give each person time to write one thing they will try and when in their My next step box, or pass. This is the step to follow up on next time. Pray the participant workbook's session prayer together or in your own words. Do not collect worksheets.

Chapter 11: Prepare Them for When

Preparation: Read Chapter 11, Prepare Them for When.

Keep this teaching central

There are conversations parents wish they never had to have. Children may meet pornography, sexual pressure, drugs, or a friend who asks them to lie. They may also have doubts about what they believe, or make a bad choice. Preparing them ahead of time is part of love. The book calls parents to teach honestly and in ways that fit the child's age, including God's design for sexuality, and to talk more directly as teens grow. Children should practice words for pressure, such as, no thanks, I have to go, and learn that leaving a harmful situation is wise and strong. The chapter is very clear about harm. If a child is pressured, exploited, touched inappropriately, or abused, it is never their fault, and the promise about a way of escape must never be used to blame a person who was harmed. Exposure can happen by accident, and a child must be able to tell a parent without fear of a frightening reaction. If a child thinks telling will bring humiliation, they may hide it, and secrecy lets harm continue. When a child tells you something hard, stay calm, thank them for telling you, check immediate safety, and do not demand every detail. If abuse or exploitation is disclosed, protect the child and follow reporting duties. Family image is never more important than the child. Questions and doubts can be asked honestly. It is fine to say, I do not know yet, but we can look for the answer together.

Read Scripture in context

Proverbs 4:23 says to guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says God is faithful and will provide a way of escape in temptation. 1 Corinthians 6:18 urges flight from sexual immorality. Romans 12:2 says not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed. Mark 9:24 records a father saying, I believe, help my unbelief. Romans 3:23 says all have sinned and fall short. 1 John 1:7 says if we walk in the light we have fellowship with one another. John 17:15 has Jesus praying for his followers to be kept from the evil one.

Guide without taking over.

Begin here: Invite parents to open session 11's My next step box in their own workbook. Ask: What did you try, and how did it go? Anyone may pass.

Session-specific guidance

Facilitators: help parents prepare for important conversations with calm, age-appropriate words. Read the safety statement again. Keep discussion general and invite anyone who needs support to speak privately with a pastor or qualified professional. If a child's safety is at risk, seek qualified help promptly, follow local reporting requirements, and contact emergency services in an emergency. Do not investigate or promise absolute secrecy.

Opening question

What is one hard conversation you would like to be ready for? Keep it general.

Pair conversation

Take turns: what will I want my face and first words to be when my child tells me something hard?

Optional group sharing

Is there a short phrase you want your child to know for leaving a bad situation?

> **Facilitator guidance**
>
> Highest safeguarding session. Do not ask about any child's exposure or abuse. Follow local mandatory reporting, never promise absolute secrecy, and have local numbers ready.

Practice and pray

At a calm time, tell your child in simple words: you can tell me anything, and I will not be angry that you told me. If someone hurts you, it is not your fault. Practice one short phrase they can use to leave a bad situation. Keep contact details for a qualified professional and local emergency services where you can find them.

Before closing: Give each person time to write one thing they will try and when in their My next step box, or pass. This is the step to follow up on next time. Pray the participant workbook's session prayer together or in your own words. Do not collect worksheets.

Chapter 12: Clothe Them in the Armor of God

Preparation: Read Chapter 12, Clothe Them in the Armor of God.

Keep this teaching central

Paul calls believers to stand strong in the Lord's strength. We can talk about evil without being consumed by fear. God is in charge, Christ has won over sin and death, and believers are told to stay alert. The armor gives children a picture. The belt of truth: know what is true about God, about themselves, and about the world, so they can hold onto it when others say something else. The breastplate of righteousness: right living matters, and when they fail, their hope is in the Savior who forgives and restores. The shoes of peace: children can be peacemakers who speak hard truth, set boundaries, and still look for peace. Peace does not mean being passive. The shield of faith: confidence rests in the Lord, who is trustworthy when the path is unclear. The helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: knowing Scripture and who they belong to gives them a steady mind. Finally, prayer. Children do not need fancy words. They can tell God about fears, sins, and thanks. Armor is not magic and does not replace safe adults. It is a way to point children to God while parents keep watching, protecting, and listening.

Read Scripture in context

Ephesians 6:10-18 describes the armor of God. Verse 14 names the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness. The chapter also draws on 2 Corinthians 5:21 for righteousness through Christ, Matthew 5:9 for peacemakers, Hebrews 11:1 for faith, and Ephesians 6:18 for prayer. 1 Corinthians 16:13 says to stand firm in the faith. Mark 10:45 says the Son of Man came to serve. Romans 12:1 invites us to offer our whole lives to God.

Guide without taking over.

Begin here: Invite parents to open session 12's My next step box in their own workbook. Ask: What did you try, and how did it go? Anyone may pass.

Session-specific guidance

Facilitators: keep the armor language hopeful, not frightening. Do not encourage talk that turns children into spiritual battlegrounds, or that blames a child's struggles on evil forces in a way that avoids getting help. Remind the group that real danger from people needs safe adults, not just prayer. Give parents one piece of armor to try, not seven.

Opening question

Which part of the armor of God do you most need yourself right now?

Pair conversation

Take turns: which piece does my child need most, and how will I talk about it for two minutes?

Optional group sharing

How can you talk about danger without scaring a child? Share one idea.

> **Facilitator guidance**
>
> Keep language hopeful. Do not blame a child's struggles on spiritual forces in a way that avoids getting help. Real danger needs safe adults.

Practice and pray

Choose one piece of the armor each day for a week and talk about it for two minutes, such as at dinner or bedtime. Ask your child, what would that look like for you this week? End by letting your child pray in their own words, or by praying for them.

Before closing: Give each person time to write one thing they will try and when in their My next step box, or pass. This is the step to follow up on next time. Pray the participant workbook's session prayer together or in your own words. Do not collect worksheets.

Conclusion: Release Them to Jesus

Preparation: Read the Conclusion, Release Them to Jesus.

Keep this teaching central

Parenting begins with receiving and ends, in a way, with releasing. Love naturally wants to hold close, and that is not wrong. Children need protection, affection, and presence. Over time they enter rooms we cannot enter and make choices we cannot make for them. Parents learn to release. Our deepest hope cannot rest on control of their future. A well-run home cannot create saving faith. Family devotions cannot guarantee devotion to Christ, and clear rules cannot change a heart. We cannot believe for our children. That should not make us passive. It should make us faithful in teaching and steady in prayer. A child may wander from what they learned. The book offers a way to keep loving without confusing faithfulness with control. Release the joy of good moments with thanks. Children do not need a performance of perfect parenting. They need parents who say what is true about failure, receive correction, and return to Jesus for forgiveness. Guilt says, I did something wrong, and can lead to confession. Shame hides. The gospel leads into the light. The same Jesus who welcomed children still welcomes them, and he can meet our sons and daughters in places we cannot reach. We parent with open hands, and invite our children to walk with us.

Read Scripture in context

Psalm 127:3 calls children a heritage from the Lord. John 17:17 records Jesus praying, sanctify them in the truth, your word is truth. 2 Timothy 1:5 mentions the sincere faith that lived first in Lois and Eunice before Timothy. 1 John 1:7 speaks of walking in the light. The book remembers that Jesus restored Peter after failure and received Thomas in the midst of his questions.

Guide without taking over.

Begin here: Invite parents to open session 13's My next step box in their own workbook. Ask: What did you try, and how did it go? Anyone may pass.

Session-specific guidance

Facilitators: close with thanks, not a test. Do not ask parents to report on their children's faith or behavior. Remind everyone they can reach out to a pastor or qualified professional for support. Offer an optional next step, like a six-week check-in, but do not promise results. Remind the group that none of this is counseling and that you do not keep their private notes.

Opening question

What is one thing you will keep from these sessions? Say it in a sentence.

Pair conversation

Take turns: who are my safe people, and what is one prayer of release I will pray for my child?

Optional group sharing

What would you like to say to the group as we close? You can pass.

> **Facilitator guidance**
>
> Close with thanks, not a test. Do not ask for reports on children. Remind everyone that pastoral support and qualified professional care are available. You do not keep their notes.

Practice and pray

Write a short closing plan: one habit from this book to keep, one person to tell about it, one safe adult or professional you can call when parenting is hard, and one prayer for your child. Then say a prayer of release: Lord, this child is yours.

Before closing: Give each person time to write one thing they will try and when in their My next step box, or pass. This is the step to follow up on next time. Pray the participant workbook's session prayer together or in your own words. Do not collect worksheets.

Continue with care.

Invite feedback about pace, questions, and safety. Ask what practices people want to continue. Do not publish attendance, reflections, or stories without explicit permission.

What helped people engage with Scripture?

What should change in the next group?

Which professional support contacts did I make available?

Finishing every session does not remove the need for professional support when concerns arise. Keep access to help open.