

Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides

January 7th

Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)

1. What was the family like that you grew up in? What did your parents teach you that most impacts your life today?

Bible Study Questions

1. Why do you think that God cares so deeply about the family?
 - What examples do you know of in the Bible of God using the family metaphor to help us understand his character?
2. Teaching on parenting can be challenging for Christians who don't have children at home. If you don't have children in your home, then where do you have influence over children? (Grandchildren, nephews/nieces, members of church community).
3. What goals do you think that most American parents have for their kids? (Or, how do you think that most Americans would define successful parenting?)
4. Read Deuteronomy 4:9, 4:39-40, 6:7-9, 11:1-7, 11:18-21
 - What do these verses teach about the goal in raising children?
 - What kind of product do these verses expect parents to be raising?
 - Read Matthew 18:1-9. What do these verses teach about Jesus' goal in raising children?
5. Pastor Michael talked about our families being an environment that cultivates Christ followers.
 - What excites or intimidates you about this?
 - Many parents outsource that job to the church. What is wrong with that approach?
6. Do you have any experience with spiritual conversations in the home? If so, share your experience.

7. If you have kids at home, what is one thing that you can do to increase the spiritual temperature? If not, how can you increase the spiritual temperature of kids of whom you have influence?
8. Are there any ways that you can be an encouragement to other families navigating this?

January 8th

Perfect family pictures are rare. We will often take multiple takes in attempts to get everyone smiling at the camera with eyes open. But happy family pictures often mask homes that are full of brokenness and conflict. The truth is that regardless of your role (child, parent, grandparent, uncle/aunt), family is hard.

- I. **God values the family as his sacred creation:** The family was God's idea. In Genesis 2, he creates the first marriage between Adam and Eve and commands them to have kids. The Bible often uses the image of God being a parent, meaning that healthy families are meant to point us to the love of God.
- II. **Wise parenting keeps the end goal in mind:** Any project will suffer if there is no goal in mind. A home will always produce something. Wise parents though direct their efforts toward a specific goal. Unfortunately, we often set the wrong goal. Back in the 90s, parents reported that the goal was successful children. In more recent years, the goal has been happy children. Yet neither are the goals that God cares most about.
- III. **God intends the family to be an environment that cultivates Christ followers:** In Deuteronomy (4:9, 4:40, 6:9-10), Moses commands the Israelite people to take every opportunity to teach their children about what it means to follow God. The result is people who are blessed by God. Proverbs 22:6 tells parents to start (train or direct) their children in what is right. Jesus shared that belief and in Matthew 18:1-9, he welcomed children. As God in the flesh, he wanted as many drawn to him as possible. He then cursed anyone who would cause them to stumble. Today, families can't force their children to be Christ followers, but can create homes in which the environment helps to develop Christ followers.
A key reason for this is that our kids will someday stand before God and go into eternity. Trophies and good grades won't matter. One's walk with God will.
Note: Many of our families have children who have walked away from their faith. My encouragement is for these parents to invite others to join them in prayer. They also can be encouraged knowing that the story is not over. God loves their children and continues to be the God who restores.
- IV. **Application Step: Introduce spiritual conversations into your home:** Many Christians are intimidated by the idea of discipling their own kids and prefer to outsource that job to the

church. However, God did not give the church that job. He gave that to parents. The church has limited influence, but can be a powerful resource for parents. In this series, we will be talking about resources that parents can use. A starting point is for a parent (or grandparent or other relative), to simply share their faith story. A kid can even reverse this by asking their parents about their faith story. Doing this brings a family one step closer to being a spiritual environment.

Conclusion

Family is hard. There is a story about a young man who worked hard on a term paper. Three days after turning it in, he received a note from his teacher. "Good research, great illustrations, wonderful bibliography. Grade: F...wrong assignment." We don't want to hear God say that some day about our parenting. We don't want to hear God acknowledge our great academics and trophies, only to miss our kids have a walk with Jesus. Our homes need to be diligent in setting up that scene.