

Hope for Parents and Children Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. What is one thing your parents or caregivers taught you that still shapes you today?
2. What is something that confused you or that you misunderstood as a child?

Read the following passages: Ephesians 6:1-4.

All of us have been profoundly impacted by our parents or caregivers. We may even be carrying deep regret as a parent or deep resentment toward our parents. Honesty and forgiveness is the only way forward.

Paul's instruction to children in this passage implicitly identifies the goal of parenting: "That it may go well with [our children]." None of us are born with all of the character traits we need to do well in life. We need our parents to help us. Parents can do this by acting as their children's guardians (especially when they are young), modeling godly character, and being intentional about developing godly character in their children.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Consider the following quote on character by Christian psychologists Henry Cloud and John Townsend. Do you agree? If so, how have you seen this reality play out in your own life?

A person's character largely determines how he will function in life. Whether he does well in love and in work depends on the abilities he possesses inside. In a world that has begun to explain away people's behavior with a variety of excuses, people are left wondering why their lives do not work. Most of our problems result from our own character weakness. Where we possess inner strength, we succeed, often in spite of tough circumstances. But where we do not possess inner strength, we either get stuck or fail. If a relationship requires understanding and forgiveness and we do not have that character ability, the relationship will not make it. If a difficult time period in work requires patience and delay of gratification and we do not possess those traits, we will fail. Character is almost everything.

Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Boundaries with Kids*

2. Is there anyone in your life that you look to as a model of godly character? Explain. Do you think you are a good model of godly character for the people closest to you? Explain. What do you think are some of your biggest character gaps?
3. How do we recognize when we are being overly protective of the children we influence (especially our own) and when we are just being good guardians? In what

areas do you think our culture as a whole is being too protective of children and in what areas are we not protecting children enough?

4. Do you think your own engagement of screens is affecting you negatively? Explain.
5. Read Galatians 6:7-8. Explain how an inability to see a connection between our own actions and their consequences keeps us from living in reality.
6. The Scriptures tell us repeatedly to love one another, respect one another, serve one another, even to “value others above [our]selves” (Philippians 2:3). Even so, it is critical to recognize that we are responsible for our own inner life and happiness, and others are responsible for their inner lives and happiness. What happens when we lose sight of these important boundaries? How do we practically know what we are responsible for and what we are not responsible for? How can we teach that to our children?
7. Do you have trouble telling your children or other people “No”? On the flip side, are you using all of your time and resources for yourself?
8. Read Luke 6:32-35. Why is a recognition of our own agency so critical for real love?

Pray