

Table Questions for Session 6

Opening Table Exercise (choose one):

- Read aloud your family mission statement.
- Share with the others at your table what happened in your family this week regarding responsibility and course correction.

Table Group Exercise: Showing Respect

- What are some areas in your home where you need God's help in order to do a better job of showing respect first—before expecting it?

Table Group Exercise: Helping Children Notice God

- What opportunities do you have to help your child notice God at work in the world around her? Try to be specific. For example: When could you stop to notice His work in creation and the natural world, or in your family's experiences?

Table Group Exercise: Modeling

- Looking back at all of the environments, what is one thing you would like to model for your child regarding identity, love and respect, responsibility, serving, living out of the comfort zone, or one of the other environments?

Questions for Reflection

1. Where do you see the Holy Spirit already at work in your child's life in the areas of knowing God and experiencing love and respect?

2. How might you come alongside and support what the Spirit is doing?

3. Have you been awakened to any ways in which you've been thwarting what the Holy Spirit wants to do in your home? If so, where have you been off track? What would you like to do differently?

Going Deeper

1. Below is a list of the 10 environments. Which one or two do you want to focus on in your family for the next few months?

Storytelling

Service

Course Correction

Modeling

Identity

**Out of the Comfort
Zone**

Love and Respect

Faith Community

Responsibility

Knowing

2. Below are some ideas for focusing on each of these areas. These ideas are meant to spark your thinking, and you may come up with even better ones for your family. Read the ideas for the one or two environments you want to address, and then write down several steps you can take in the coming weeks and months.

Storytelling

- Tell The Big God Story to your child using the people cutouts you received in Session 2, if they are age appropriate.
- Tell your child parts of The Big God Story. Some parents do this at bath time or before bed. Be sure to connect the individual narratives to The Big God Story. (If you aren't familiar with the people or their places in The Big God Story, maybe your first step is to investigate those passages. The facilitator of your training can help you.)
- Tell your child your own redemptive story, both what led up to your decision to follow Jesus and what following Jesus has involved for you. Depending on her attention span, you might give her the two- or five-minute version. Let her ask questions if she wants to know more.
- Tell your child a story of your life from when you were his age. Even a story in which you did something you wish you had done differently can be a learning experience for him. Choose a story that is relevant to something he is going through or a character quality you would like to strengthen in him.
- If you can't easily think of stories from your own life, take some time to write down your redemptive story. Or reflect back to when you were your child's age and just start freely writing what you remember about yourself and incidents in your life at that time.

Identity

- Read the book of Ephesians (it's not very long), asking yourself the question, "According to Paul, who am I because I belong to Christ?" Make some notes about

things you need to take time to reflect on day after day until they soak in. Also ask yourself, “How should this identity affect the way I live?”

- Write a paragraph stating in your own words who you are in God's eyes.
- Read Ephesians again, this time asking, “Who is my child because she belongs to Christ?” Make notes about things you want your child to know. Also note anything you have trouble believing about your child. Is that because she isn't yet following Christ? Or is it an area of unbelief in your heart?
- Write your child a letter, describing in your own words who he is in God's eyes.
- Speak a blessing over your child as you are putting him to bed. (If he is a teen, choose some evening time.) Use Ephesians 1 as a source of ideas for what you will say. Even if he is not a Christ-follower, you can affirm that God made him in His image, that He loves him, that he is precious to God, and he is precious to you.
- If you haven't already done the water-and-food-coloring illustration at home for your child, try it. All you need is a clear plastic bottle that is mostly full of water and some food coloring. Show your child the bottle of plain water. Explain that faith is not meant to be an add-on in our lives—it should penetrate the whole of who we are. Add a few drops of food coloring to the water. Watch as the coloring swirls through the water. Ask your child how faith is like the food coloring in the water. Then shake up the bottle and explain that eventually, faith should leave no part of us unchanged.

Faith Community

- Attend a worship service consistently.
- Involve your child in church-based children's and/or youth ministry, and plan your schedule so he can attend consistently.
- Set aside money and time for your child to attend Christian camp.
- Open your home (or some part of it) for youth to gather there. Make it a place of refuge.
- Involve yourself consistently in events and settings where your child can make friends with other Christian young people.
- If you already have a lot of Christian friends, invite non-Christian friends and relatives to family events as well so they can experience your faith community.

Service

- Look for ways to model service for your child by asking, "What needs to be done?" and then following through.
- Give your child service opportunities at home. Even toddlers can start learning to put their toys away. Explain the reason why we do these acts of service.
- Talk with your child about why God wants us to serve our neighbors. Then take a walk around your neighborhood, asking, "What needs to be done?" You might go to the park where your child plays and look for litter to pick up. Even better, go to the park and ask the question, then let your child think through what needs to be done. Then do it.
- Ask each person at dinner, "How did you serve our family today?"
- If you already do volunteer work, call your child's attention to it. Explain what you are doing and why.
- If your child is old enough, ask her to choose a service opportunity in your church or neighborhood.

Out of the Comfort Zone

- Set aside some time to review your day or your week and ask yourself, "When did I protect my child from something when it would have been better to let him face it and build his faith muscles?" Pray about your fear, pride, or the pain you feel when your child hurts. Ask God to show you your heart issues and help you deal with them so you can give your child the right amount of stretching.
- Pay attention during your day with your child. Ask God to show you the difference between appropriate protection and over-protection.
- Review your household for signs of laziness, ingratitude, lack of motivation, selfishness, slothfulness, a critical spirit, or gluttony. You might respond by decreasing what you do for your child, instead training him to do it for himself, and then holding him accountable for doing it. You might give him acts of service in the family or outside it. You will get pushback, but stick to your plan and talk with your child about service and why too much comfort makes us flabby in faith.
- Take your older child on a short-term mission trip. Or if she is a teen, send her on a mission trip with other teens.
- If your child has an unreasonable fear of something, how can you help him walk through this fear by faith, rather than just avoiding it?

- Ask someone in your church who is responsible for an outreach ministry how children or teens might contribute. Then get your family involved.
- It's essential for children to have a secure comfort zone as well as opportunities to stretch beyond it. If your family is currently in chaos (because of an illness, a move, a job loss, conflict, divorce), what can you do to provide more of a comfort zone for your child?

Responsibility

- Have a family meeting and talk about responsibility. Choose one area for your family to begin with. For example: Taking ownership for one's life, gifts, and resources before God. Or taking responsibility for the well-being of those in your family and your spiritual family in Christ. Or seeking out in love those who are hurting, poor, and spiritually lost.
- If you have a habit of not being responsible for your own life, your family's well-being, your spiritual family, or the poor and the lost, then addressing your own habit may need to be your first priority. Take this issue to prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to help you become more responsible. Where do you need to grow? With regard to money? Time? Your family's needs? The poor? What is one step you can take?
- If you need help managing money responsibly, your church may have a ministry to help, or maybe you know someone who is good at handling money and can help you learn. Seek help. Commit to living within your budget with enough extra to be generous in God's work.
- At back-to-school time, set aside a sum of money for each child's new clothes. Tell them they get to decide how to spend it, but if they forget to budget money for underwear and socks, you won't come through later with extra money. If you've never done this before with them, you may need to walk them through how much socks cost, how many pairs they need, and so on. But do let them choose and live with the consequences.
- If you have tweens or teens, you can give them a monthly sum that needs to cover hair care, their cell phone, games, and everything else beyond their basic needs. When the money runs out, there's no more until next month.
- If you have a younger child, train her to take responsibility for her belongings. If she is old enough to read, give her a list to check before she gets in the car: sweater, lunch bag, etc.
- Grow a garden with your child and talk about the law of sowing and reaping. Be sure they do most of the work of weeding and watering!

- Take responsibility when you fail to set a good example. Say to your child, “I was wrong. Will you forgive me?”
- If you miss a chance to model responsibility, you can redeem that situation by modeling for your child: “You know what? I should’ve taken responsibility for this or that, but I didn’t. I missed out on that blessing. God will accomplish what He wants to, but I could’ve been part of His big story in this way—and I blew it this time. So I’m going to look for another opportunity. Next time I can do that differently.”

Course Correction

- Go back to the handout A Plan for Course Correction. Walk through this process for the behaviors and heart attitudes you especially want to address in your family. If you find any of the steps difficult, which ones are hardest for you? Is it hard to identify the heart issue behind the behavior? Is it hard to choose an appropriately painful consequence? Is it hard for you to show love to a child who has misbehaved? Pray about this.
- When you have to impose a consequence on a child for misbehavior, make a point of hugging the child, saying, “I love you,” and putting words to your vision for change: “I know you can do better than this. You are able to be considerate of others.”
- If you have trouble coming up with words of encouragement in the moment of correcting a child, take time alone at another time to think through what words each of your children need to hear at such moments. Plan ahead so you don’t have to think on your feet in an emotional moment.
- If you have a child who seems indifferent to the consequence you have been using for some habit, give some thought and prayer to what consequence might be painful for that child’s unique temperament without resorting to excessive harshness. For instance, if this is a child who doesn’t mind being alone, then a time out might not be the right choice, but withdrawing a certain privilege this child especially values (a television show, a game, a favorite toy) might have more impact.
- When your child starts showing evidence of taking the right course, celebrate. Say something like, “You were very considerate of her feelings! Great job!” Give a hug. If it’s a major milestone course correction (like the end of a long and painful consequence), you could have a special family meal or other celebration.

Love and Respect

- Slow down. Cancel commitments so your pace is less hectic.
- When your child speaks, give your attention. Get down to a small child’s eye level.

- Give a teen eye contact. Don't interrupt. Demonstrate that you have listened by repeating what the child said. If you disagree, still repeat first to show you have listened and understood. (You may need to slow down in order to give this kind of attention.)
- When you need to go back to another task, tell the child you need to do so. You don't need to give a child attention 24/7, but a child needs regular doses of your full attention.
- If you tend to spend money on your child as a substitute for time, attention, or other forms of demonstrating love, repent of that. Spend less money and give more time and affection.
- Protect your child from verbal abuse, manipulation, and guilt.
- Don't treat children as your peers and buddies. If you need someone to confide in, find another adult or a group of adults. Consider joining a church-based small group.
- Say, "I love you" and other words of affection and encouragement out loud. If they don't come easily, plan ahead.
- If words come easily, look for deeds in which to demonstrate love and respect.

Knowing

- Join a Bible study so you can learn what the Bible says.
- Plan time alone with God. Ideally, take some time with God every day. (This is hard if you have several toddlers!)
- Let your spouse look after the kids for three hours while you get some extended time alone with God. Go for a walk or just sit with God. Don't use this time for errands.
- When you learn something about God from the Bible, your small group, a sermon, or a book, look for a way to tell your child what you learned.
- Use sunsets, full moons, insects, and other parts of the natural world as opportunities to talk to your child about God's wisdom and power as the Creator of the world.
- Pray with your child at bedtime. Teach your child to ask God to help him hear Him.
- Pray aloud in the car. Let your child hear you asking God to guide you and to give

you His strength for a task.

Modeling

- The ideas in the above nine environments are full of examples of modeling. Read them and see if anything sounds like a good idea for you.
- Take an assessment of each area to determine where you are modeling Christ and where you are not. Identify those for your child.
- Consider ways you are silently modeling like tithing or serving at work, and find ways to talk about these with your child. This isn't bragging; this is inviting her into your life and showing her how to live in truth.
- Identify other good role models in your child's life who are living out God's kingdom in God's Spirit. Invite those role models over to have a family dinner.
- Talk with your child about how he is modeling the various environments to others around him.