

WHO'S DRIVING

GPS

Read: Genesis 2:24, Ephesians 5:1, 25 & Ephesians 6:1

1. Remember that moment when you were 5, 10, 15 when you swore that when you grew up you'd never. . .? What were the circumstances? What kind of family did you think you'd have or what kind of parent was it you thought you'd be?
2. What have been the things that have influenced your perception of what family is? What about what a parent's job is? Why does this matter?
3. Genesis 2 recalls for us the work God gave to Adam following his creation and the family God created for him. What are we to understand about this family based on Genesis 2:24? What does the kind of companionship God provided in Eve tell us about how we are to build our families?
4. Look at Ephesians 5:1-2 & 5:25. If we look to things outside of ourselves to determine how we should build our families, what do these verses tell us about the families God had in mind for us?
5. How do our perceptions of God affect how we will understand Ephesians 5:1? How do our experiences with our own parents affect how we will understand God's love for us as his children?
6. For some of us making the distinction between what God did, out of love, for his family on earth and how our own families behaved or how the media represents families' behavior toward one another is huge. Why?
7. Paul wrote Ephesians not to confront any specific problems occurring in Ephesus, but instead to strengthen and encourage the church there. Paul uses the occasion of writing this letter to remind the Christ followers in Ephesus of the blueprint God has laid out for them regarding many things, including the family. Look at Ephesians 6:1. What does Paul say about the relationship between parents and children?
8. Note that Paul addresses the relationships between parents and children only after he addresses the relationship between a husband and wife. Why do you think he discusses the honor and obedience a child is to show for a parent only after he discusses the kind of love a man is to show to his wife? Take a moment in your group discussions or on your own to paint the portrait of a family the way God intended for it to be built. What kind of portrait does this paint of God, our Father?
9. Do you experience this portrait as a gift of love from a heavenly father, or as a burdensome set of rules? Why do you think that your perception matters to God?
10. With a GPS navigation system, we can choose to follow tomtom's or suesue's directions for a smooth hassle free trip, or we can choose to strike off on our own disregarding the path laid out for us. When we are driving and choose to take a route different from the route programmed into our navigator, we are given constant reminders to correct our route, "Please, take the next available legal u-turn." Think about God as the ultimate "Navigator," are you experiencing corrective reminders regarding your family? How are you choosing to handle those reminders?

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Popcorn

Read: Genesis 2:24, Deuteronomy 6:1-2, Proverbs 3:11-12 & 22:26

1. Looking at your own youth, what was your impression of what parenting was all about? Was it a role you thought you would have when you "grew up?"
2. Moses uses the first part of Genesis to remind the people of Israel that the God they follow "Yahweh, God," is not only *the* God of creation, but also a God of *relationship* who cared and provided for his creation. Why do you think that it is important to begin any discussion of family with a look back at the provision God has made for humanity since the very beginning?
3. What is the provision and care for the original family of creation reflected in Genesis 2:24?
4. Take a look at Deuteronomy 6:1-2. Following a faithless generation that wandered for forty years in the desert, Moses is using the occasion of this writing to give the next generation of Israel God's instructions preparing them for possessing the Promised Land. It may seem to us in a 2007 world of information, technology & mass media, that the circumstances of Moses and the Israelites are very removed from what we might need to know to build our own families and parent our children, but is it? The people of Israel were about to enter a land filled with people who believed in many Gods innumerable distractions. Is it really that different for the Israelites to raise a family in that environment than it is for us to try to raise a family in USA 2007?
5. These directions laid out in the first part of Deuteronomy dealt less with how the Israelites should live alongside and among foreigners, and more with how they are to live in relationship with Yahweh and among one another. As we look at building families according to God's blueprint in an often hostile world, what can we take from the way Moses gave instruction to his people?
6. What was the result for the Israelites for living within the covenant God had made with them, in essence living in relationship with God and one another in the way Moses describes in Deuteronomy? What can we anticipate as the result for us in following that same way of living life in relationship?
7. Look at the verses from Proverbs. This book of wisdom makes no guarantees, but does suggest that certain actions steer us toward certain results. What do the proverbs listed for this week suggest about our parenting efforts?
8. How do these proverbs reinforce what Moses tried to reinforce for the Israelites?
9. Why does this wisdom apply to us just as much today as it did to the Israelites?
10. What are the things that get in the way of us experiencing God's discipline as a lighter burden than living outside of a relationship with God?
11. How can we encourage one another in being the kind of trustworthy, just parent God has modeled in His relationship with us?

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Game Day

Read: Proverbs 29:15, 22:15 & Hebrews 12:5-6 ,11

1. From where do most parents get their guidance for raising their children? Is the advice from these sources rooted in any fundamental truth? Is it a truth that we want to be perpetuating?
2. What do you suppose scares parents most about the idea of having to discipline their children? Why is that?
3. How can discipline show love?
4. How does making sure our children know God provide much of the discipline they will need when they are older? What is a parent's role in the discipline to their child?
5. Think back across the big story we are told in God's love letter to us. God is just, He keeps His promises even when that means we must suffer the consequences for not following His direction. How can discipline build trust between a parent and a child? How does that trust make our voices and God's voice stand out among the crowd?
6. Often parents who choose not to discipline their children make that choice because they perceive discipline, or following through with consequences, as mean. How can not disciplining our children actually be meaner?
7. In your perception, what is the loudest voice in our culture competing with? Parents' voices or with God's own voice?
8. How do we, according to what we have seen, compete with this deafening competition? What would be our best "game plan?"

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Counter Culture

Read: Philippians 4:8, Psalms 101:3 & Joshua 24:15

1. Look at Psalm 101:3 and Philippians 4:8. In what ways are these verses giving us the direction we are to take in leading our families and parenting our children? Whose behavior are these verses really addressing? Why is recognizing that the key to understanding God's blueprint?
2. In parenting our families, at the end of the day, what is it really that we can be held accountable for? Whose actions are we 100% in control of? Why is recognizing that so critical to our success in leading our families?
3. Now, read Joshua, keeping the verses from Psalms and Philippians in mind. What are we being asked in the question Joshua poses to the people of Israel as they are occupying the Promised Land? To answer this question, let's take a step back for a moment and remember how the Israelites came to occupy this land where they find themselves at the time of Joshua's address. Who gave them the place they now occupy? Why was it given to them? What would be the response you would expect in receiving such a gift?
4. Now take a jump forward. For those of us with families or for those asking for families, who makes those provisions for us? Who gives the means necessary and the resources to care for those families? To whom, then, does it make the most sense to follow as a guide through the raising and caring for our families?
5. How is the idea of choosing to follow God so counter cultural? Who or what would our culture have us follow? What makes that such an unnatural way to walk out our journey as a parent or a family member?
6. What is the heaviest influence on our families in American culture? According to Joshua, what should our response to this be? What about according to Paul's letter to the Philippians? The Psalmist's?