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GOD-HONORING PARENTING 1

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Focusing on the Right Target: Influencing the Heart of your Child

ASSIGNMENTS

- **TRUTH** – Please recommend that parents in your JG read one of these books as an optional reading assignment:
 - *Shepherding Your Child's Heart*, by Tedd Tripp.
 - *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens*, by Paul David Tripp.
 - *Grace Based Parenting*, by Dr. Tim Kimmel.
 - *How Children Raise Parents: The Art of Listening to Your Family*, by Dr. Dan Allender.
 - *Don't Make Me Count to Three*, by Ginger Plowman.

EXERCISES

- Review the memory verse of the week and talk about how it relates to the **TRUTH** section.

DISCUSSIONS

- **TRUTH** – You can discuss any of the **IN BIBLE** questions you would like to address. Here are some tips that may help:

- **GENESIS 8** – The Flood was a means to punish evil in the world, but it did not erase evil from the human race because Noah and his families were “carriers” of the disease called sin. God showed incredible grace to them and us by allowing the human race to continue and promising not to destroy it again, despite the fact that sin was not yet fully removed.

Every human being is born with a sin nature – an inclination toward evil (verse 21). This means that parenting will always be difficult. Children, to a greater or lesser degree, will always seek their own will, and often open their hearts to Christ through the influence of devoted Christian parents.

- **DEUTERONOMY 6:4-7** – The point you want to make with these verses is that God commands parents to be instrumental in passing faith to the next generation. Christian parents are to point their children to the love and fear of God through constant teaching and informal conversation.
- **1 KINGS 8:54-61** – Solomon asked God to incline Israel’s hearts because he knew that their hearts (like ours and our children’s) were naturally inclined toward sin. An inclination is a tendency, or habit of thought and action. A heart that is inclined toward God sees Him as the God of love and mercy that He is. It is curious (at least) about how to be in relationship with Him, and is open to His authority and direction.
- **JOHN 1:19-34** – Just as John the Baptist influenced Israel to incline their hearts toward Jesus, so Christian parents must exercise their influence to help their children see that a life lived for Jesus is a worthy and blessed pursuit.
- **TRUTH** – You will want to focus your discussion on these five truths about passing on our faith:
 - Children come into the world predisposed toward evil (Genesis 8:21).
 - Christian parents must counter this inclination by demonstrating an attractive, Godward (Christ-centered) life (Deuteronomy 6:7).
 - Christian parents should engage their children (life-on-life) to impart their spiritual life.
 - **PROVERBS 4:10-27** – This passage demonstrates how Solomon put Deuteronomy 6:7 into practice. He was actively engaged (life-on-life) with his son to impart his own spiritual life product. He wanted his son to comprehend the wisdom and blessing of a Godward life. He especially focused on his son’s heart, knowing that it was the center of all his thoughts, desires and actions. Use this passage, especially verse 23, to illustrate that parents’ Godward influence on their children should focus on their hearts.
 - **LUKE 15:11-32** – Use this passage to clarify the point that good behavior can mask a wayward heart. Therefore, the heart should be the target of parental influence.
 - Christian parenting focuses on the heart, not behavior (Luke 15:28-30).
 - The Holy Spirit uses a parent’s love for Jesus to incline a child’s heart toward Christ.
- **EQUIPPING** – Give your JG time to discuss these questions. Give special attention to the 1st question.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY** – Allow time for smaller groups of two or three to ask accountability questions and pray for one another.

- **MISSION** – Remind your JG that the purpose of life-on-life missional discipleship is to develop mature and equipped followers of Christ for the lost world. Remind them that a missional life is one that takes up Christ's mission to make the gospel known through word and deed across the street, track and world. Review what your JG has learned about being missional this year – missional living, praying, serving, telling and dialoguing. Challenge your JG to now apply what they have learned and engage in a missional life by the power of the Holy Spirit living within them.

Allow the group to discuss the different ways they have been involved in missional living this year. Encourage them to be honest about the obstacles to taking up Christ's mission that they face and what needs to change in order for them to be more intentionally engaged in mission.