



LIFEgroup Study Guide

February 16 - March 1

LIFEgroup Study Guide

This study guide follows along with LBF Church's current Sunday message series, and is intended to be a supplement in your daily passionate pursuit of Jesus.

- *Watch last Sunday's message video:*
[www.lbf.church/messages]

Is your group stumped? Did you come to a question that you feel needs clarification? Our church isn't too big. Contact Pastor Dan with your questions.

- *Contact Pastor Dan:*
danfranklin@lbfchurch.com

Lesson 1: The Calling

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 • Pg. 5-7 • February 16

Lesson 2: The Gift

Luke 11:9-13 • Pg. 8-10 • February 23

Lesson 2: The Long Game

Hebrews 12:4-13 • Pg. 11-13 • March 1

Raise Them Up

The Calling

Lesson 1 • February 16 • by Dan Franklin

Main Point

The core calling of Christian parents is to teach their children the truth about God.

Getting Started

1. What are some different goals that parents might have in their parenting?

2. In what ways do parents pass their values along to their children?

Explanation of the Passage

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

¹⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."

Deuteronomy 6:4 is a crucial passage for the Israelites. It could be said that it is the John 3:16 of the Old Testament. Moses calls Israel to attention and then writes a core truth about God. The Lord, Yahweh, is one. Not only is Moses saying that there is only one God, but that he deserves our sole attention and worship. We don't split our allegiance between gods. We trust and love one God, the Lord. And we strive to love him with all our hearts, souls, and strength. This is the foundational commandment in the context of the many commandments that God gives through Moses.

Moses says that the commandments to make the Lord our sole God and to love him are to be on our hearts. This means that before we focus on technical obedience to God's commands, we offer our hearts to him. We seek to have our obedience flow out of love rather than merely out of obligation. After all, God had brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. And for Christians today, God has brought us out of slavery to sin and into new life in Jesus Christ.

Moses then moves to the calling for the Israelites to pass the knowledge of God to their children. He tells them to impress the commands on their children. More specifically, he tells them to talk about them whether they are sitting at home, walking along the road, lying down, or getting up. In other words, Israelites parents were called not merely to sit their kids down and tell them about God. They were called to live before their children in constant awareness of God, talking about him all the time.

Not only were they to talk about God, but they were also to use physical symbols to mark God's presence. They were to tie God's commands on their hands and their foreheads. Israelites literally did this through phylacteries, which are small black boxes that contain Scripture. The Jews would tie these boxes to their hands and foreheads. And they were to write the commands on the doorframes of their houses and gates. The Jews did this through the use of mezuzahs, which are small cases containing Scripture that are put on doorframes. The idea was that Israelite parents would surround their children with the reality of God.

While, as Christians, we are not bound under the Old Testament law, this passage powerfully demonstrates the calling for parents to pass along to their children the knowledge of God. More important than physical health or financial stability or family fun was the calling for believing parents to lead their children to know and love God.

Digging In

3. What struck you most about the passage—or the sermon, if you heard it?

4. What do verses 4-6 tell you about the kind of relationship that God wants with people?

5. Verse 7 instructs parents to talk about God with their children. What do you think are some advantages to talking to your children about God all the time as opposed to only in specific, focused settings?

6. Verses 8-9 instruct the Israelites to use physical symbols to represent their devotion to God. What do you think we can learn from these practices today?

7. If the Israelites were going to live before God with the kind of devotion described here, what are some sacrifices this would require?

Wrestling with Issues

8. It could be easy to look at the practices described in verses 8-9 of this passage as strict and legalistic. What do you think is the difference between making purposeful choices for God and living legalistically?

Taking it to Heart

9. Name three ways that parents today can pass the knowledge of God along to their children.

10. What if the critical action point that you think God is calling you to do in response to this passage?

Raise Them Up

The Gift

Lesson 2 • February 23 • by Dan Franklin

Main Point

Godly parents reflect God by meeting their children's deepest needs.

Getting Started

1. Name something that children often want, and yet parents often withhold it.

2. What are some ways that parents regularly sacrifice for the good of their children?

Explanation of the Passage

Read Luke 11:9-13.

⁹ "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks,

the door will be opened. ¹¹ "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

This is a passage less about parenting than about how God is a good Father to us. Jesus tells his disciples to ask, seek, and knock, so that they will receive, find, and have the door opened to them. The context is that he is saying that God is not withholding good things from his children, but often we try to find good things through our means. When this happens, we end up empty and frustrated. If we are willing to humble ourselves and diligently seek God, he will meet our deepest needs.

Jesus then parallels God's fatherhood with human parenting. He says that no earthly father would withhold food from his child. He would not give his child something that would bring harm instead of life and sustenance. And this is true even though earthly fathers are broken, selfish, evil sinners. How much more will God the Father give good gifts to those who ask him?

But Jesus does not merely leave the idea of good gifts in the generic. He says explicitly that God will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. There is an assumption behind this statement. Jesus is assuming that our deepest needs are spiritual. More precious than gold or good, than jobs or spouses, than houses or cars, is the presence and power of God through the Holy Spirit. Far from being a passage in which we are guaranteed that God will give us whatever we ask, this passage is saying that God will never withhold good gifts that will meet our true and deepest needs. After all, he is a good father. And if we are going to reflect him in our parenting, we will focus on making sure that we are always generous—and never withholding—with meeting the most profound spiritual needs of our children.

5. Jesus gives two silly scenarios in verses 11-12. What do you think is the main point he is communicating in these verses?

6. In verse 13, Jesus suddenly talks about God giving the Holy Spirit to those who ask. How do his words here about the Holy Spirit shed light on his promises in verses 9-10 that those who ask will receive?

7. If God is the ultimate good Father, how do you think human parents are meant to emulate what is said about him in this passage?

Digging In

3. What struck you most about the passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. Verses 9-10 flow directly out of a brief parable that Jesus tells in verses 5-8. Read those verses and explain how the parable sheds light on Jesus' promises in verses 9-10.

Wrestling with Issues

8. In verse 13, Jesus says that human fathers are "evil." How, though, can a person be evil if he is willingly giving good gifts to his son? What do you think is Jesus' point in using the term "evil" to refer to human fathers?

Taking it to Heart

9. What are some ways that parents can prioritize the spiritual growth and well-being of their children?

10. What is the critical action point that you think God is calling you to do in response to this passage?

Raise Them Up

The Long Game

Lesson 3 • March 1 • by Dan Franklin

Main Point

Godly parents reflect God by disciplining children for long-term growth.

Getting Started

1. What makes it difficult for parents to do an excellent job of disciplining their children?

2. What are some benefits of being a disciplined person?

Explanation of the Passage

Read Hebrews 12:4-13.

⁴ *In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.*

⁵ *And have you completely forgotten this word*

of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, ⁶ because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son."⁷ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?⁸ If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. ⁹ Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live!¹⁰ They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. ¹¹ No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. ¹² Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. ¹³ "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed."

This passage, as with the previous lesson, is about God as a father. In this passage, we get to learn how he disciplines us and to see that there are some lessons to be learned about how godly parents can follow his lead.

The writer of Hebrews begins this passage by talking about the difficulties and sufferings that the people have experienced. It has been a struggle, although he reminds them that they have not yet struggled to the point of facing physical violence. Instead of lamenting their difficult situation, he tells them that God, as a good Father, disciplines his children. This seems strange because many of us associate parental discipline only with punishment. But while discipline may include elements of punishment, it is much more. Discipline is about shaping someone and helping grow in areas where they are lacking. The suffering being experienced here is probably not because God is punishing them, but instead because God is using suffering to shape and grow his children.

The author encourages the people to endure their hardships as if it was discipline from God. After all, he said, every good parent disciplines their children. This is not a sign of hating the child, but of loving the child. In fact, lack of discipline is neglect. Lack of discipline points toward the parent not caring enough about the child's character to take the time to discipline them. And God is the all-wise, all-loving, all-powerful One. This means that his discipline is always wise and always from the right motives. It is, like all discipline, unpleasant, but it bears fruit if we respond to it.

The writer then ends this section by calling upon the Christians to strengthen themselves and to continue to endure their difficulties. If it is discipline from God that they are experiencing, then it will be fruitful. Instead of getting bitter or giving up, they will do well to trust God and walk faithfully through the discipline.

This passage demonstrates that God, as a good Father, disciplines his children. And the assumption is that this is what any good parent would do. The book of Proverbs consistently reinforces the teaching

that good parents discipline their children. They don't do this out of anger or tyranny, but out of love for the children and a desire to help them grow. Discipline is not easy (for the parent or the child), but it is necessary if we have the long-term good of the child in view.

Digging In

3. What struck you most about the passage—or the sermon, if you heard it?

4. In verses 4-6, the writer equates the suffering the Christians are facing with the discipline of God. How can suffering—even as the result of the evil actions of others—end up helping Christians bear fruit?

5. Verses 7-8 take for granted that parents discipline children who they care about. Why would this be a safe assumption?

6. Verses 9-11 compare and contrast God the Father with human parents. Why is God's discipline more trustworthy than the discipline of human parents?

7. How do the commands in verses 12-13 relate to the previous verses about God's discipline?

Wrestling with Issues

8. What do you think is the relationship between discipline and punishment?

Taking it to Heart

9. While many of us want to live disciplined lives, very few of us want to endure the discipline necessary to do so. How can you more actively embrace God's discipline in your life?

10. How can you live in a way that reflects God's fatherhood in your parenting and relationships—especially when it comes to the idea of discipline?