

Small Group Guide

How to Build a Relationship with Your Children

September 13, 2026

Introduction

This guide is designed to help your group move from hearing the sermon to living it out together.

Parenting is one of the most humbling callings God gives us, and none of us navigate it perfectly. Use this time to encourage one another, share honestly, and point each other back to the grace of God.

Key Takeaways

- 1. The Chief Goal of Parenting** The primary aim of raising children is not personal happiness, family success, or even well-behaved kids. It is to raise young people into the understanding that their lives exist to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
 - 2. The Warning: Do Not Provoke Your Children** Ephesians 6:4 opens with a caution to parents. Paul warns against producing a settled, baseline anger in children that leads to emotional and relational breakdown. Three primary ways parents provoke this kind of anger are harshness, relational indifference, and spiritual inconsistency.
 - 3. The Admonition: Bring Them Up** Parenting requires intentionality. Discipline corrects children in the moment. Instruction prepares them beforehand. Both must flow from a heart transformed by the gospel.
 - 4. Rigid Flexibility** Effective parenting requires knowing when to hold firm and when to extend grace. Parents who are excessively rigid protect their children from the world but fail to prepare them for it. Parents who are excessively flexible fail to give their children any standard by which to measure right from wrong.
 - 5. Build Bridges Early** The goal is to build relational bridges with your children while they are young so that when they are older, they can walk back across them. It is never too late to start building.
 - 6. Everything Rests on Grace** Our success as parents is not measured by how our children turn out. It is measured by how much we depend on the grace of God every single day. We cannot take the credit when our kids do well, and we cannot carry all the blame when they struggle. All is grace.
-

Ice Breaker

- What is one word that describes how you feel about your role as a parent or as someone who influences children? Why did you choose that word?
-

Reflecting on the Sermon

On the Warning

- The sermon identifies three ways parents provoke anger in their children: harshness, relational indifference, and spiritual inconsistency. Which of these do you find most convicting, and why?
- The speaker distinguishes between the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the condemnation of the enemy. He says conviction moves us toward reconciliation, while condemnation simply makes us feel like failures. How does that distinction change the way you respond to your shortcomings as a parent?
- Spiritual inconsistency was described as the deepest source of anger in children. Why do you think the gap between what we profess and how we live is so damaging to our relationships with our kids?

On the Admonition

- The sermon describes discipline as correcting children in the moment and instruction as preparing them beforehand. Which of these comes more naturally to you, and which do you need to grow in?
- The speaker says the goal is for families to be interdependent on each other and totally dependent on Christ. What does that actually look like in the everyday rhythms of a family?

On Rigid Flexibility

- Where do you tend to land on the spectrum between excessive rigidity and excessive flexibility? How has that tendency shaped your relationship with your children?
- The speaker used the example of cell phones and social media to illustrate rigid flexibility. What is an area in your own family where you are currently wrestling with where to draw the line? How are you thinking through it?
- The kindergartners in Boston asked for phone lockers so parents would put their phones away and play with them. What does that story reveal about what children actually need from us?

On Grace and the Long View

- The speaker shared the story of an elderly couple whose children came to faith at their funerals. What does that story stir in you, particularly if you have children or grandchildren who are not currently walking with the Lord?
 - He says we need grace to understand how much grace we actually need. What does it look like practically to depend on God's grace in your parenting rather than depending on your own effort and strategy?
-

Practical Applications

Choose one or two of the following to put into practice before your group meets again.

Build a Bridge Identify one relationship with a child or grandchild that needs intentional investment. Make a specific plan this week to pursue that relationship. A phone call, a shared meal, showing up for something that matters to them, or simply asking them to tell you about their life without offering advice.

Examine Your Consistency Spend time in honest reflection this week. Ask yourself whether the version of you that your children see at home matches the version of you that shows up at church, at work, and in public. If there is a gap, bring it before God and consider whether there is a specific conversation or apology that needs to happen.

Secure Your Own Mask Evaluate the state of your own discipleship. Are you connected to a community of people who know you well enough to speak truth into your life? If not, identify one step you can take this week to pursue that kind of relationship, whether through a small group, a mentor, or a trusted friend.

Practice Rigid Flexibility Identify one area in your parenting where you have been either too rigid or too permissive. Talk with your spouse or a trusted mentor about what a more balanced approach might look like. Write down one specific adjustment you are willing to make.

Pray Specifically Write down the names of your children or grandchildren. Spend time each day this week praying specifically for them by name, asking God to draw them to Himself and asking Him to make you the parent or grandparent they need.

Find a Mentor Identify one person whose family you admire and who is either in the same season of parenting as you or has successfully raised children who love God. Reach out to them this week and ask if they would be willing to share their experience with you.

Closing Reflection

The speaker closed with these words from Frederick Buechner:

"The grace of God means something like this, here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen, but do not be afraid. I am with you. Nothing can separate us. It is for you I created the universe, and I love you."

Take a moment as a group to sit with that. Parenting is hard. The world is full of both beautiful and terrible things. But the God who calls us to raise our children is the same God who promises to be with us through every season of it.

Close your time together in prayer, asking God to give each person in the group the grace they need to be the parent, grandparent, or mentor He is calling them to be.