

CoreGroup Guide | The Christian Parent's Field Guide - Part 1

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From Pastor Charity

This week we begin a new sermon series, *The Christian Parent's Field Guide*. Our shared practice for this series is **Grow in Groups**. Take a minute to look at the *Start / Grow / Stretch* on the [Shared Practices](#) page. Reflect on where you are now and where you hope to go during this series. Much like parenting, the journey of faith can be wild, but we don't have to walk alone.

The memory verse for this series is Proverbs 22:6 from the Common English Bible (CEB):

*Train children in the way they should go;
when they grow old, they won't depart from it.*

Here are three simple ways to practice memorizing a verse:

1. **Write it** (one time a day on a notecard, in your notes app, or on your mirror).
2. **Say it out loud** (at the same time daily - driving, brushing teeth, before bed).
3. **Pray it** (turn the verse into a one sentence prayer for yourself or someone you love).

Welcome

Hello! Today we are diving into an exciting series on faith development, particularly in the context of parents nurturing faith in their children. The process of loving and raising children can give us insights into God's love and care for God's own children – us! Parents can model faith and establish patterns that expose children to faith practices, remembering that we all embrace faith in our own way and in our own time.

Even for those of us without kids, we have nieces, nephews, friends, neighbors and younger generations we can influence. We will talk about how we share our faith with the younger people in our lives, and model our faith to others who are observing us. Whether we overtly speak about our faith or not, children and youth are noting our words, actions and behaviors. Whether we are acting with this intention in mind or not, we are creating faith blueprints for others.

Opening Prayer

Dear God, Thank you for the opportunity to contemplate faith formation. May your Spirit inspire us to help children grow in their faith. While a parent's impact on their children may feel like the main focus, help us to recognize how these lessons impact our interactions with all of the many people in our lives. Inspire us to deepen our own faith during this season as well. Amen.

Ice Breaker

When you think about a captain, describe the kind of "captain" that first pops into your mind.

The Head

This week we are considering the role of “captain” and focusing on how a parent works to create habits for faith formation. At an early stage in life (and in faith), a parent can help establish practices that mold the child’s future development.

Proverbs 22:6

*Train children in the way they should go;
when they grow old, they won’t depart from it.*

- This verse suggests that parents are training children in faith. What are your first impressions of this instruction? What feels challenging to you about this guidance?
- How did the faith practices in your family of origin impact your own faith development?
- Why do you think the lessons we learn in childhood have such a strong influence on us as we grow?

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

⁴ Israel, listen! Our God is the LORD! Only the LORD!

⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your being, and all your strength. ⁶ These words that I am commanding you today must always be on your minds. ⁷ Recite them to your children. Talk about them when you are sitting around your house and when you are out and about, when you are lying down and when you are getting up. ⁸ Tie them on your hand as a sign. They should be on your forehead as a symbol. ⁹ Write them on your house’s doorframes and on your city’s gates.

- This scripture encourages families to talk about faith issues as part of daily life. What does this look like in your home or other spaces in your life?
- What stands out to you about the words the Israelites are instructed to teach their children? In what ways are these words still relevant to us, thousands of years later?
- Share a scripture verse that is important to you or your household. How do you keep these words central in your life?

The Heart

We have these “blueprint” texts from the Old Testament about integrating faith into daily life, and this can be really helpful for families! But sometimes we can focus too much on the mechanics of the faith practices, on the To-Dos and the checklists, and we lose sight of how our hearts react to this guidance. After all, we are all still growing in faith, regardless of our age.

- Name a regular faith practice in your life that you would encourage for a child.
- How does that faith practice help you to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your being, and all your strength” as we just read in Deuteronomy?
- If you are a parent, or have other regular interactions with children, share about a success or challenge you’ve had “training” the young people in your life.
- How have these successes and challenges impacted your own relationship with God?

The Hands

Ready to get to work? You may be wondering: where do I start? Here are a few faith practices to work on with your children when they are young:

- Learn a Bible verse (your child may memorize it more quickly than you do!)
 - Pray (before meals, before bed, before school, before a doctor's appointment, etc.)
 - Have a quiet time to talk with God
 - Read a Bible story together (see resources below)
 - Go on a nature walk and thank God for creation
 - Spend Sunday mornings at church!
 - Visit the zoo, art museum, or science center and talk about how you see God there
 - Sing songs to praise God
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- What is one action you can take with a child to help them connect with God?
 - As you think about the children in your life, what are some examples of ways you can make loving God a central part of your home and family?
 - How have you been successful launching faith conversations with a child? Was there a certain question, location, or circumstance that prompted this opportunity?
 - How can your CoreGroup support you to grow in your role as a "captain" this week?

Closing Prayer

God, this task feels daunting! Sometimes faith feels so very personal and it is hard to be vulnerable to talk with someone about our conversations with you, and our reliance on you. But we care so much for these little ones in our midst. Help us to shower them with love from our hearts and from yours. Prompt us to acknowledge: You are our source of life and wisdom. You are our creator and we want to say "thank you" all the time! We love you God; use us to reflect your love to the children in our lives. Amen.

Affirmation

As parents/guardians/caregivers/extended family, we may not receive a "thank you" from a child. Read this note of affirmation as though it was written personally to you!

Dear [name],

So often I'm reminded of your parenting skills. God makes you wise, patient, quiet, strong and discerning as you follow your heart with your dear child [children].

They are greatly blessed. They cannot realize it yet so I am telling you. "Never tire of doing what is right" Paul said. He knew we'd be tired, doubtful, worried and angry sometimes. The courage we need comes when we trust God's perfect faithfulness.

You are doing the hard work of loving your child [children] very well. Enjoy them and the time you have with them.

*With so much love-
Your church family*

Going Deeper

Ask someone who knows you well to write a brief note about your strengths as a parent. Focus on those qualities!

From Pastor Charity

ICYMI, catch the [recording of the One CoreGroup One Day event](#). And yes, we sang Proud Mary. 240 people showed up!

Keep the CoreGroup feelin' by hosting a [Summer Hang](#) to meet new people just for the heck of it, or you might consider inviting them to your group this fall after hanging this summer.

Additional Resources

[The Jesus Storybook Bible](#): this book ties each Bible story directly to Jesus!

[VeggieTales](#) is a resource with meaningful videos (and songs) that relate to particular Bible stories ([Jonah and the Whale](#), and [Daniel and the Lion's Den](#)) and behaviors/habits ([Madame Blueberry](#), [Larry Boy and the Rumor Weed](#)). These are just examples but many other resources exist!

Parenting Books by:

[Meredith Miller](#) (also <https://www.instagram.com/meredithannemiller/>)

Dr. William Sears and Martha Sears on Christian Parenting