



Week Five

Opening Prayer

God, thank you for being with us here. Help each of us to hear what you have for us and help us to connect with one another in friendship.

Talk It Over

This series has been all about looking at the three areas of life we are designed to love in and live in — upward with God, inward with ourselves, and outward with others. This week we looked specifically at how this truth and cycle can play out in our parenting.

- Tell us about a funny time your parent or parents totally failed.
- If you are a parent, tell us about one of your own funny parenting fails.
- Tell us about an adult you know who has a great, healthy friendship with their parent.

Read Psalm 127:3 (NLT)

While parenting comes with a lot of tasks and responsibilities, the ultimate long-term dream of parenting is that an adult child and parent share a life-giving, mutually satisfying relationship. This week we said it this way: Parenting is a relationship, not a task.

- In what ways did your parents invest well in their relationship with you through the season of your development?
- In what ways did your parents get lost in the “tasks” of parenting through the seasons of your development?
- Why do you think it’s so easy to make “tasks” the central focus on parenting?
- If you are a parent, when is it easiest for you to focus on relationship and when is it most challenging?

Read Deuteronomy 11:18-20

These were words God spoke to God’s people. These words remind parents to use their influence in their children’s life with great intentionality since relationships play a key role in our development — they model and shape us in profound ways. Relationships play a huge part in our overall health as people and the overall quality of life. This week we looked at three different relationships that shape us in profound ways: Our relationship with our parents, the relationships we have with people outside our home, and the relationship we have with God.

- While you were growing up what category of relationship — parental, people outside your home, or God — brought you the most joy? What about the most heartbreak?
- Since relationships end up playing such a big part of our overall life, what are some overarching ideas parents might consider doing to help teach their child to place a high value on relationship?

This week we looked at three big questions. Below we will share the questions, recap some basic information we heard regarding the question, and then we will talk through the question as a group.

Question One: What are you doing specifically to enhance your child's relationship with you?

The word 'enhance' means to improve the quality. Parenting can often feel like something we must endure, but the goal is to proactively enhance our relationship with our child. An easy way to help enhance a relationship with someone, including our children, is to learn how to speak their love language.

- Can you think of a time someone intentionally tried to enhance their relationship with you?
- How familiar are you with the idea of love language? If this concept of love languages has been an asset to you, please share your learnings with us.
- Have you ever been in a relationship with someone who didn't know how to speak your love language? Tell us about a time someone had great intentions to make you feel loved but they missed the mark.
- If you are a parent, what are some things you can specifically do to enhance your relationship with your child this season?

Question Two: What are you doing to help influence your child's relationships outside the home?

A difficult part of parenting is the constant need to let go more and more. Letting go can be difficult for parents for lots of reason. For starters, we know parents love their children deeply and they want what's best for their child. We also know parents often fear how their child's choices will make them look as parents. For some parents, the core issue may be control or anxiety. Regardless of the why, parents can empower their children to live their best life by teaching their child how to develop their own minds and discernment. A practical way to help your child develop is to move past simple, black-and-white commands and move towards asking more questions and sharing the 'why' behind the rules.

- Tell us about someone who has helped you develop your own voice by asking you questions and sharing their 'why' with you.
- If you are a parent, talk through some examples of when you can start to ask more questions instead of simply making more commands.

Question Three: What are you doing to advance your child's relationship with God?

Two common mistakes parents make on the topic of teaching their child about God is to either expect someone else will teach their child about God (i.e. a hand-off) or to avoid being pushy and not give any direction (i.e. hands-off). However, it's important for parents to know that they are the most qualified person to guide, model, and support their child towards God. The best tool a parent can offer their child is to lead by example.

- In what ways (if any) did your parents encourage your relationship with God growing up?
- If you are a parent, what are you doing this season to advance your child's relationship with God?

Read Our Theme Verse For This Series: 1 John 4:19 (NIV)

Parenting is hard, but parenting doesn't need to be done alone or through our own strength and power. Just like we heard every week of this series, God invites us to approach parenting remembering first and foremost we are loved by God. We engage best upward, inward, and outward when we embrace that simple truth.

- If you grew up in a home with parents who knew God loved them, how did you see your parents own connection with God influence their parenting?
- If you grew up in a home with parents who didn't know God loved them, what are some ways you think their life would have been different if they knew God loved them?
- If you are a parent, what sort of example is your current life teaching your children about God?

Closing Prayer

God, you know everything about us and you love us. Help us to be aware of your love on a personal level and to love the people in our life and home from an overflow of knowing your love first hand.

A Special Group Leader Note: If this topic ends up stirring up a lot of difficult feelings for anyone in your group, please reach out to groups@eastlakechurch.com for some support and direction.

How To Use this Discussion Guide

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create space to grow in friendship and faith. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group connect in friendship and grow faith.

With that in mind, consider reviewing the guide before your group to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressure to read all the content or to hit all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help foster friendship and faith for your specific group.

Spend some time praying for your group, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance regarding your specific group.