

PARENTING THROUGH THE PHASES

LEADER GUIDE

CONNECT YOUR KID TO A BIGGER STORY

SESSION 5

PARENT CUE TEAM

CEO

Reggie Joiner

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF MESSAGING**

Kristen Ivy

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
FAMILY STRATEGY**

Sherry Surratt

BRANDING & GRAPHICS

Ryan Boon

Sharon van Rossum

Kelsey Swanson

Cassie Streeter

VIDEO PRODUCTION

Beth Helmer

Leigh Halsema

BP Media

Chris Pochiba

PROJECT MANAGER

Sheeva Olyaie

WRITERS & EDITORS

Reggie Joiner

Kristen Ivy

Sherry Surratt

Holly Crawshaw

Karen Wilson

Tim Walker

USER AGREEMENT

The reThinkGroup, Inc., gladly grants permission to licensed organizations and their authorized agents to tailor the PARENTING THROUGH THE PHASES materials to fit their unique requirements, locale, and format preferences. If you wish to edit the content substantively—including teaching scripts, small group guides, and any other content in which Biblical principles and concepts are presented—you are obligated to do so within the doctrinal guidelines expressed in our Statement of Faith.

These resources are intended to be downloaded and printed for use by the licensing entity only and may not be electronically transferred to or duplicated by other non-licensed entities. Any unauthorized reproduction of this material or incorporation into a new work—including podcasts or video of this content—is a direct violation of U.S. copyright laws. PARENT CUE and the PARENTING THROUGH THE PHASES logos are trademarks of The reThink Group, Inc.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

SESSION 5: CONNECT YOUR KID TO A BIGGER STORY

PARENTING THROUGH THE PHASES

Knowing what to expect before the group begins sets you up for leadership success! Read through this entire Leader Guide for a short summary, things to think about, and tools to use to communicate to your group.

SESSION 5 SUMMARY

If you were to ask parents which priorities matter most when it comes to their kids, their responses would fall into three major categories:

Smarter decisions
Stronger relationships
Deeper faith

When Jesus was asked what was most important, he narrowed it down to one thing that gets to the heart of all three categories:

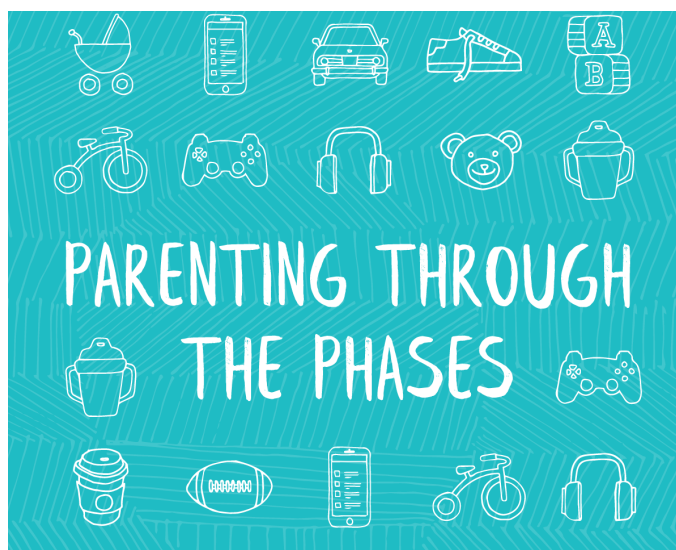
“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27 NIV).

To help our kids learn to love God, imagine that as a parent, you have three dials you are constantly turning at every phase:

Dial #1 is **WONDER**. It affects a kid’s thinking and imagination about God’s love.

Dial #2 is **DISCOVERY**. It affects a kid’s emotional and moral response to God’s love.

Dial #3 is **PASSION** and it affects a kid’s relationships reflect God’s love.



Knowing how and when to turn these dials helps us prioritize what we say—teaching our kids that everything we do in life comes back to how we love God and how we love others.

THINK ABOUT THIS

Discussing faith in a forum like a small group can be intimidating. But when it comes to parenting, there are few areas where we want to win *more* than in the area of faith. That’s why this conversation is so important. And just like when we talk about faith with our kids, it’s important we keep this session’s content relational, not informational.

If you feel comfortable, start off group today by sharing how faith was talked about in your home growing up. What was your general view of God, faith, and church as a kid? Were you encouraged to read the Bible? And if you grew up without formative faith experiences, how did that shape your teenage and adult years?

You’re in the fifth week of study now and have hopefully turned a corner toward vulnerability. But as you lead group today, keep in mind that you may still have members who are hesitant to share. That’s okay. Give everyone space to communicate and process in their own time. Likewise, if there is someone “dominating” the discussion, you might redirect the conversation by asking a direct question of someone else who doesn’t mind sharing.

Start with a few Icebreaker questions (included with the Discussion Questions) to loosen things up and put everyone at ease. At the end of each week’s Discussion Questions, we’ll help you end well with a reference to the Phase Guides for additional reading and a Parent Cue, a prompt to help each parent apply what they just discussed.

SESSION 5: CONNECT YOUR KID TO A BIGGER STORY

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BOTTOM LINE:

IF YOU WANT TO HELP A KID HAVE A BETTER FUTURE,
THEN HELP THEM UNDERSTAND HOW TO LOVE GOD.

**“LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART
AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR
STRENGTH AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND”; AND, “LOVE
YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”**

LUKE 10:27 NIV

ICEBREAKERS. To start the discussion, choose one of the following Icebreaker Questions. (Or more than one if time allows.) You may want to ask these before the teaching video, whatever works best for you.

- What’s the craziest or funniest question your kids have asked you about faith, God, or church?
- What’s one thing you can remember your parents saying about faith growing up?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS. These questions are a guide to get the conversation started in your group—don’t feel like you need to ask everything you see here! As long as you’re having a conversation, you’re on the right track. Also, feel free to adjust the questions to fit the needs of your specific group.

1. Consider this statement. “The way your child loves God affects everything else in their life.” How do you agree or disagree with that statement?
2. Is it freeing or uncomfortable to think that all the Bible can be summed up with the word LOVE?
3. What do you want to be true about your kid’s faith one day when they grow up and leave your home?
4. On a scale of 1 – 10 how confident do you feel having faith conversations with your kid, and why? What resources (or people) might help you feel more confident?
5. Consider these three words: Wonder, Discovery, Passion. Which one do you feel you inspire most in your home? And which one would you like to become more intentional about?
6. What do you feel is most helpful in growing your kid’s faith in the phase they’re in now? (ex. Church, mission experiences, school FCA, family conversations, etc...)

PARENT CUE: Choose one simple thing to do this week to help your family connect to a bigger story—talk about your faith, ask your child a question, volunteer/help someone in need, discover something new about God in a story from the Bible.

For additional ideas for the phase you are in now, read about the Faith Conversation in the Four Conversations section of your Phase Guide.

SESSION 5: CONNECT YOUR KID TO A BIGGER STORY

COMMUNICATION PLAN



CONTINUING THE EXPERIENCE

The communication plan is designed to help your small group attendees engage with the content in each session. This plan equips you to share quick snippets of what your group is learning or even send a word of encouragement. Below you'll find bite-sized content that you can post on your attendees' social media channels or text to their phones. There are texts, posts, and images for Facebook and Instagram.

Remember to make these posts and texts yours. Don't feel like you have to use all of the content provided in a given series. Use this plan as a starting point to leverage technology with your small group.

TEXT MESSAGES

SEND THIS TO EVERYONE IN YOUR GROUP AFTER YOU MEET:

Hey friends, we had a great talk in our 5th session. I hope, like me, you thought about how to prioritize what's most important in helping your kids learn to love God and love others. Don't miss our concluding session next week!

SEND THIS TO ANYONE WHO MISSED GROUP THIS WEEK:

Hey—we missed you this week! We talked about how to influence our kid's view of God, themselves, and others. Next week is our last session. We'll show you how to get really practical with everything we've talked about so far. Hope to see you there!

SEND THIS TO ONE OR TWO PEOPLE IN YOUR GROUP AFTER YOU MEET, JUST BECAUSE:

Hi! Just wanted you to know I'm so glad you're a part of our Parenting Through the Phases group. What did you think about this week's topic? Did anything stand out to you?

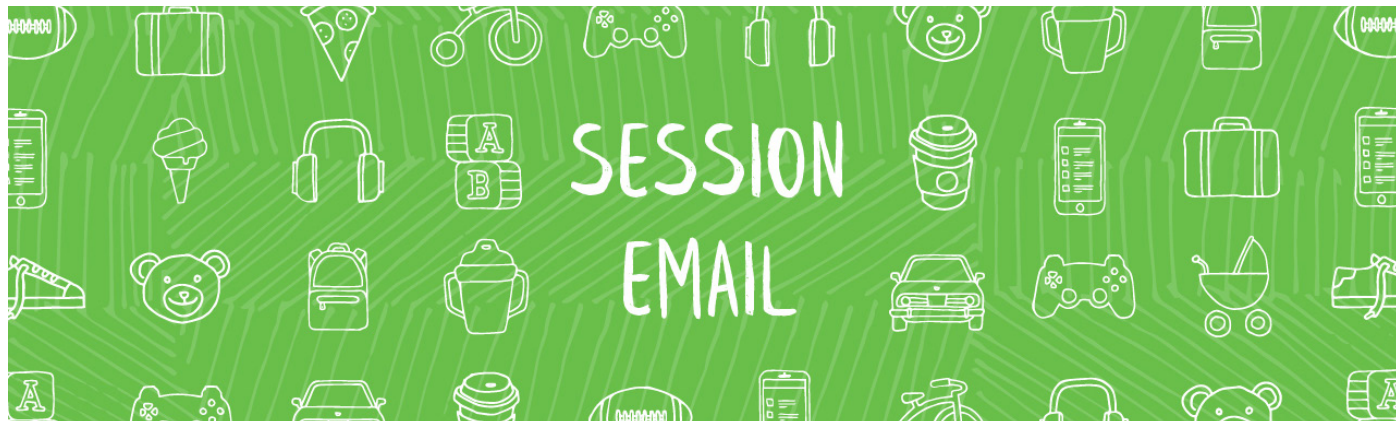
SOCIAL MEDIA

POST THE IMAGE PROVIDED WITH YOUR FILES AND COPY/PASTE THE TEXT BELOW INTO A FACEBOOK OR INSTAGRAM POST.

This week, we had a great discussion centered around the most important thing that will help our kids have a better future: learning to love God. When we help our kids connect to God by inciting wonder, discovery, and passion, it shapes how they view God, themselves, and others—which affects everything else in their life. If you want to know how to practically do all the many things we have talked about in our series so far, don't miss our final session.

SESSION 5: CONNECT YOUR KID TO A BIGGER STORY

SESSION EMAIL



FOR THE LEADER

Remember to email your small group before each meeting with a reminder of when group starts and ends, directions, and any information that would be helpful. To make it simple, just **copy and paste the email below** and fill in any information that

your group members might need to know. Since every group and leader is different, feel free to change the email text to fit your needs.

SESSION 5 EMAIL

Hey everyone!

Wow, I can't believe it's already session five in our **Parenting Through the Phases** small group. This week our topic is **Connecting Your Kid to a Bigger Story**. While last week we talked about a few critical conversations we can plan on having, there's nothing more important than the way we talk about our faith. The way you help your kids learn to love God and to love others will define everything else in their lives. This session explains how to help connect your kids to God so they develop a faith of their own. It's going to be a great discussion that you won't want to miss.

Here are the details for our meeting:

Date/Time:

Address:

Looking forward to seeing you!

SESSION 5: CONNECT YOUR KID TO A BIGGER STORY

TEACHING SCRIPT

SESSION 5 TEACHING SCRIPT

CONNECT YOUR KID TO A BIGGER STORY

REGGIE JOINER

Bottom Line: If you want to help a kid have a better future, then help them understand how to love God

Scripture: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27 NIV).

The following is an edited teaching script from the transcript of the video. If you choose to teach the content instead of showing the Teaching Video for this session, we encourage you to take the content and edit it to work within the context of your small group. We’ve kept any personal stories or references in the script so that you can use them as a guide when substituting your own stories.

Has it ever occurred to you that basically every parent or guardian wants the same thing for their kids? A better future.

Regardless of their religion, background, ethnicity, or nationality, every parent hopes their son or daughter will have the best future possible. If you asked parents to prioritize what matters most, it could range anywhere from good friends, to a college education, to a decent job, to a happy marriage, to a Christian faith, and maybe even an Apple computer.

But if you organize everything that’s on their list—trust me, we’ve done this multiple times—you can always boil it down to three major categories:

Smarter decisions
Stronger relationships
Deeper faith

And not necessarily in that order.

Actually, we could make the argument that all three of those things could be summarized by one thing. One idea that

matters more than any idea. One rule at every phase that affects everything in life.

Nearly two thousand years ago, some religious leaders asked Jesus what He thought mattered most in life.

It’s interesting how Jesus responded. It’s quoted so much that sometimes I think we lose the impact of it. But Jesus, in one sentence, summarized life when He was asked to name the Greatest Commandment. Here’s what He said:

The Greatest Commandment is to: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” (Mark 12:30 NIV).

Then Jesus said something that caught everyone off guard. He reached into the six hundred plus laws of the ancient writings of Moses, pulled out an isolated verse, and attached it to what they thought they knew. He elevated one rule above the rest. He basically said, “Oh, and one more thing. There’s a second part to the Greatest Commandment that’s just as important as the first part.”

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Jesus took something Moses had said about how you relate to God and expanded it to include how you relate to others. He made it clear that life and faith aren’t about a list of rules, but about responding to a relationship.

Jesus suggested that faith in God has less to do with believing a list of truths, and more to do with knowing and loving God. Basically, everything comes back to how you love God, how you love others, and how you love life.

Let’s paraphrase . . .
Love matters.

SESSION 5: CONNECT YOUR KID TO A BIGGER STORY

TEACHING SCRIPT (CONTINUED)

Let's amplify it . . .
 Loving God matters.
 Loving people matters.
 Loving life matters.

And all happen to be true at the same time. The Greatest Commandment is a genius way of summarizing pretty much everything. I mean, of course it is. It came from the One who made everyone in His image. And before you get too opinionated about an overemphasis on LOVE, you just have to remember who said it. Be careful you don't minimize what Jesus maximized.

Think about what Jesus said this way:

Imagine that you have three dials you can turn to help kids connect to God, and they're all related to loving God.

Dial #1 is WONDER. It affects a kid's thinking and imagination about God's love.

Dial #2 is DISCOVERY. It affects a kid's emotional and moral response to God's love.

Dial #3 is PASSION. It affects a kid's relationship how they reflect God's love.

As a parent, you're constantly turning these three dials in your kid's life at every phase. You're actually doing what a lot of experts in culture do. They've obviously learned how to appeal to the same three things in every kid. They've studied what inspires and moves kids. They know kids are naturally curious about things that are mysterious, that kids want to understand who they are, that kids want to connect and belong.

So they play to their audience—actually better than most parents. Just watch the latest animated Disney movie, play with the newest educational toy, listen to the most recent band, or pick up an iPhone. There has been a lot of research and money spent to understand what drives children.

It's almost as if every kid is wearing a sign that says . . .

Amaze me.
 Inspire me.
 Move me.

So think about what you do in the light of that.

That's why your role is to . . .

Amaze a kid's mind to imagine God.
 Inspire a kid's will to follow God.
 Move a kid's life to serve God.

And remember whenever you teach, play, model, discuss, sing, story-tell, pray, worship, or read, you're usually turning one of three dials so you can help kids . . .

relate to God in such a way that affects how they
 relate to others,
 and relate to themselves.

And when you lead kids to follow Jesus, you tend to define faith in terms of a relationship. That's why we define authentic faith on our phase life maps in the light of the Greatest Commandment:

"Trusting Jesus in a way that transforms how you love God, yourself, and others."

If we encourage the kind of faith in a child that motivates them to pursue loving God, loving others, and loving life, they win.

That's why you should take your cue from Jesus and introduce every kid to God's story of love and forgiveness. It's a story of redemption. I don't know if you've thought about it this way, but it's actually a story about restoring God's image so a child can become more of who God designed them to be.

Think about the story of the Bible. Here's the Cliffs Notes® version:

God created Adam, the original man, in His image.
 Then Adam sinned and made a mess of God's image.
 So, God decided to become a human and show everyone how much He loved the people who were made in His image.

That's actually why Paul refers to Jesus as the second Adam. Jesus came to fix what the first Adam messed up. And that's exactly what Jesus did.

Everything that Jesus did—the entire Gospel story—reinforces that we should treat others like they're made in the image of God. It all comes back to the Greatest Commandment.

This is where you come in—as parents, you show up every week in every phase of every kid's life.

Because you want them to walk away one day with a faith that's not defined by what they do, but instead it's determined by who they love. Right?

The one rule Jesus made was to make relationships the rule.

Here's why . . .

If you want kids or teenagers to walk away from your home and your church one day and remember what's most important,

SESSION 5: CONNECT YOUR KID TO A BIGGER STORY

TEACHING SCRIPT (CONTINUED)

you need to lead them strategically to that end. You need to stay focused on what Jesus said matters.

You know why you should stay focused? Because just like the disciples or the Pharisees, it's easy for us to get sidetracked. And the sobering reality is you have a limited window of time to influence every kid.

So, here's the question:

Since you have 936 weeks
to influence your kid's faith,
what are you going to do or say?

Are you going to take them chronologically through the entire Bible?

Are you going to cover your church's fourteen core doctrines?
Are you going to teach verse-by-verse through the book of Habakkuk?

Are you going to amplify whatever your lead pastor is speaking about on Sunday?

Just remember, you'll only get a limited number of weeks in a year to tell your elementary child or your middle schooler everything they need to know about God, Jesus, faith, forgiveness, grace, love, life, and eternity.

You have to choose what to say and what not to say at every phase. You have to develop the skill of prioritizing truth.

Carefully consider the following statement:

It's not really your job to teach everything that's in the Bible to every kid at every phase. It's your job to teach the most important things in the phase when they matter most.

Yes, it's not your job to teach the Bible cover-to-cover. Just think about it for a minute. It's your job to help kids know how to love God and follow Jesus. Let me explain it another way.

Just because everything in the Bible is equally true doesn't mean everything in the Bible is equally important.

Let's go back to what Jesus said to the Pharisees when they asked Him which commandment was the greatest.

Actually, it's what Jesus DIDN'T say that made a very obvious point.

He didn't answer their question with, "All the commandments of God are equally important, so there's not one commandment that's the greatest." Instead, He prioritized what was most important by explaining the Greatest Commandment. Then He re-organized the rest of the Bible around that idea. And then He clearly stated, "*All the Law and the Prophets hang on these*

two commandments" (Matthew 22:40 NIV).

Every once in a while, an idea comes along that's so big, it becomes a primary organizing factor. In one statement, Jesus settled thousands of years of theological debate about what really matters when it comes to life and faith. He told us that everything should come back to this concept of loving God.

So, what if you simply decided to organize what you teach your kids the way Jesus said it's already organized anyway?

What if you just make sure every commandment, every principle, every parable, every story, and every truth can be easily arranged to reflect how you love God, love others, and love life?

- Make what you teach your kids relational, not informational.
- Build your strategy and spend the most of your time around what Jesus said matters the most.
- And make sure you go to a church that makes a relationship with God a priority too. Remember you'll need other adults saying the same things you say to your kids about God.

Think about it this way . . . Isn't LOVE the distinctive *motive* of God's story throughout the Bible? It's why God made us in His image so He could love us and we could love Him.

Isn't LOVE the distinctive *message* of the Gospel of Jesus?

Jesus lived to model God's love.

Jesus died to prove God's love.

Jesus rose again to empower us with God's love.

Isn't LOVE the distinctive *mark* of the church?

Just ask Paul or James. They both agreed.

That's why they reposted what Jesus said in their letters to the church. They referred to Jesus' commandment to love as the "Royal Law," as if to say this idea belongs at the top of everything.

Since you have a limited amount of time with every kid, then what's the one thing you don't want them to miss?

So, don't miss it—so they won't miss it. Don't let them walk away from your home or church one day believing the foundation of their faith is a list of rules or skills or even practices. Make sure they know everything comes back to one rule—and that rule gives you the basis to . . .
make smarter decisions,
have stronger friendships,
and develop a deeper faith.

If you want to help a kid have a better future, then help them understand how to love God.