



## ***Week Two:*** Prepare and Release

Text: Ephesians 6:1-4

There is much in the world today that inspires fear for parents, and even causes some to question the wisdom or desirability of having children at all. Parents face a choice—will we parent our kids based on fear or will we adopt a God-centered model for our parenting? With God at the center of our lives, we can prepare our children to love Him and follow His ways so that we will be able to release them to thrive in a difficult and evil world.

*A note to small group leaders:*

*It is a common pitfall in Bible Study discussions to become distracted by how a topic or a passage pertains to someone else rather than ourselves. In extreme cases, we may even assume the lesson ONLY applies to someone else. Some of us focus on “How I already do this well” or “Why this is impossible for me.” A wiser approach is to commit to think deeply about how every passage applies to me, today.*

*Depending on the stage of life of your group members, you as the leader may have to think creatively about how to help your group members do this. If you have people who are not parents or are not currently raising their kids, be sure to ask them their thoughts and feelings each week. Be aware that there may be pain in this discussion for those experiencing fertility struggles or who have*

*a strained relationship with their adult kids, for example. It may help to remember that we are all called to reproduce ourselves, spiritually, whether we are parents or not. In fact, older believers are instructed to train younger brothers and sisters in godly living. (Titus 2) And the Apostle Paul compared his ministry of discipleship to the work of a mother and a father of young children. (1 Thessalonians 2)*

*The following questions are based on the "My Application" guide on the back of the sermon notes in the bulletin. Feel free to revise or customize them according to your group's needs.*

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Read Matthew 6:25-34 and 7:7-11. What is God the Father like? How would you advise a father to treat his children, with God as the model?
2. Why is learning obedience so important for all people, children and adults? (See Ephesians 6:1-3 and John 15:9-10.)
3. What is the relationship between providing good gifts for our children and teaching them obedience? Is this a contradiction or tension in this for you?
4. Read Ephesians 6:4.

Recall that "training" (or nurture) refers to rhythms and routines that demonstrate a God-centered life. "Instruction" (or admonition) refers to words of teaching or encouragement.

- a. How does your weekly schedule reflect your love for and trust in God's ways? Would you have difficulty saying to your children (or other people you influence), "Follow me as I follow Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1)?
- b. How do your conversations encourage your children (and others) to love and trust God? Has talking about God become natural for you? Why or why not?

**Application:**

- Return next Sunday for the next installment. Stay engaged. Even if you think it doesn't apply to you...not yet, or anymore—Ask God what He wants to say to you...and LISTEN.
- Who do you know who needs to hear this series? Invite them to join you.

**Prayer:**

Pair up. Share with your partner:

- one thing that is painful for you about this lesson, or
- one thing you believe God wants you to do in response to what you are hearing

Pray for each other.

**Scripture Memory:**

*"Fathers, do not exasperate your children;  
instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."*

*Ephesians 6:4*