



FLOURISHING
LIFE JOURNEY

Flourishing
FAMILY

FINDING A PLACE
TO THRIVE



**ROGER PATTERSON
& BEN HAYS**

Flourishing
FAMILY

BEN & KELLI HAYS



FLOURISHING
LIFE JOURNEY



Copyright © 2023 by Ben & Kelli Hays and Roger Patterson

Published by Cityrise

Copyright and use of the title “Flourishing Family” and curriculum template is retained by Brett Eastman.

Limited Use Permit - extended to CityRise

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotes are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, unless otherwise indicated.

Printed in the United States of America



contents

Foreword by Roger Patterson	4
Acknowledgements	7
Welcome	9
Using This Workbook	10
Outline for Each Session	12

SESSIONS

SESSION ONE: Rooted in Christ	14
SESSION TWO: Chicken or the Egg	26
SESSION THREE: Trophies and Triumphs	38
SESSION FOUR: To Shelter or Not to Shelter	50
SESSION FIVE: Kids on a Mission	62

APPENDICES

Frequently Asked Questions	76	Hosting an Open House	87
Small Group Agreement	78	Leading for the First Time	89
Small Group Calendar	80	Prayer and Praise Report	90
Memory Verse Cards	82	Small Group Roster	91



foreword

BY ROGER PATTERSON

I'm so excited that you are holding this curriculum in your hands. I had the chance to dream up this curriculum in an office in Orange County, California, in August of 2022 with Brett Eastman and Sean Foy. We were unpacking the concept of flourishing, and we just knew that we had to offer study on a flourishing family. Pastor Ben Hays, our young adults pastor, has laid out an amazing journey for us all. In this journey, we talk about laying a solid foundation and building from there!

This study does not have every answer for every challenge you have, but it will act as a guide to help you choose well the paths you take so that your family can flourish. That's our heart. That's what we want for you and the next generation. We want your family and our families to flourish. Pastor Ben Hays and his wife Kelli will share from their experience, offer up some great discussion questions for the studio audience, and also help facilitate discussion in your own lives through this study guide. Engaging in this content will surely lead to growth!

More than anything, we want you to know that you are not alone. May you and your family flourish as you seek to live this message well!

Stay Expectant,

ROGER PATTERSON





acknowledgements




I would first like to thank my wife Kelli for being the greatest ministry partner I could ever dreamed of for over twenty years, including on this project. It was a great privilege to get to bring you this material side by side. I would also like to thank our six children who have lived their lives in the “fishbowl” of ministry, but each have a love for and commitment to the Church.

I also have a special place in my heart for the many counselors, mentors, and close friends, too many to mention by name, who have walked with us through difficult seasons of life and helped us keep pursuing a family life that is flourishing. I would like to also say how much I appreciate our Senior Pastor Roger Patterson for his excellent leadership and vision, and for mentoring me and holding me accountable to putting my family first.

I cannot neglect to say a heartfelt thank you to our amazing staff at CityRise Houston, who always rises to every occasion to serve with passion and effectiveness. So many wonderful people on our team worked tirelessly on this project to manage details and logistics, and they did it with a joy and a love for the Lord and His Work. Finally, I want to express much appreciation to Tony and Heather Gray for opening up their beautiful home for the filming of the Flourishing Family video series. Your hospitality blessed us all.



welcome



At CityRise, we are passionate about investing in your family and giving you the tools and support you need to flourish in both your marriage and your parenting journey. Today, more than ever, our families are facing enormous challenges from every side of the cultural storm in which we live. Over the next five weeks, we are going to engage in some real talk and dig into some biblical instructions as we fight for the health of our families together. We want you to know you are not alone!

If this is your first venture into this type of personal engagement, let me assure you right from the outset that your choice to join a small gathering for collective learning, growth, and living has opened up a space for God's influence in your life and family. I recognize that I can't expect you to be open with others in your small group if I'm not willing to reciprocate. Therefore, I'll be as candid as I can within the context of the subjects we'll be addressing throughout this series.

These upcoming weeks might present challenges, but they will ultimately contribute to the flourishing of our families. Any transition away from unhealthy habits or erroneous behavior feels unfamiliar initially, and I can vouch for this personally. However, unless we identify what's getting in the way of our flourishing and take consistent steps forward, we won't witness what God can do when we truly devote our marriages and families to Him. My foremost prayer is that, in various ways during this period, you will truly experience the power of God in these areas and see positive changes that will benefit your family for a lifetime.

I've taken great pleasure in preparing these sessions, and I'm eagerly anticipating the time we'll spend together in the next few weeks. I'd like to express my gratitude in advance for your commitment. I genuinely believe that the discussions you'll engage in throughout Flourishing Family could potentially be some of the most impactful you've ever had. They might even signify a significant turning point in your life. For now, my hope is that you enjoy your shared moments, allowing room for God to work and transform your family for flourishing!


BEN HAYS

YOUNG ADULTS PASTOR, CITYRISE

using

THIS WORKBOOK



- 
1. Notice in the Table of Contents there are three sections: **(1) Sessions;** **(2) Appendix;** and **(3) Small Group Leaders.** Familiarize yourself with the Appendix parts. Some of them will be used in the sessions themselves.
 2. If you are facilitating/leading or co-leading a small group, the section **Small Group Leaders** will give you some hard-learned experiences of others that will encourage you and help you avoid many common obstacles to effective small group leadership.
 3. Use this workbook as a guide, not a straightjacket. If the group responds to the lesson in an unexpected but honest way, go with that. If you think of a better question than the next one in the lesson, ask it. Take to heart the insights included in the **Frequently Asked Questions** pages and the **Small Group Leaders** section.
 4. Most of all, enjoy your small group experience!
 5. Now read the **Outline of Each Session** on the next pages so that you understand how the sessions will flow.

outline

OF EACH SESSION

Most people want to live a life that is orderly, meaningful and satisfying, but few achieve this by themselves. And most small groups struggle to balance all of God's purposes in their meetings. Groups tend to overemphasize one of the various reasons for meeting. Rarely is there a healthy balance that includes teaching, evangelism, ministry, practical exercises, and worship. That's why we've included all of these elements in this study so you can live a healthy, balanced spiritual life over time.

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSES. For each session we have provided a Memory Verse that emphasizes an important truth from the session. This is an optional exercise, but we believe that memorizing Scripture can be a vital part of filling our minds with God's will for our lives. We encourage you to give this important habit a try.

THEME. The lessons we will learn during Flourishing Family are best illustrated in the lives of real people. Each session's teaching will include comments by real people reflecting on the significance of the theme for that session in their lives.

COMING TOGETHER. The foundation for spiritual growth is an intimate connection with God and his family. A few people who really know you and who earn your trust provide a place to experience the life Jesus invites you to live. This section of each session typically offers you two options. You can get to know your whole group by using the icebreaker question(s), or you can check in with one or two group members—your spiritual partner(s)—for a deeper connection and encouragement in your spiritual journey. As your group begins, use the Small Group Agreement, Small Group Calendar, and Purpose Team Roles to help your group see how everyone has a part in making a small group come to life.

LEARNING TOGETHER. Serving as a companion to the Flourishing Family small group discussion book is the Flourishing Family Video teaching. This video is designed to combine teaching segments from Pastor Ben along with leadership insights and personal stories of life change. Using the teaching video will add value to this six week commitment of doing life together and help you discover how walking with Christ changes everything.

GROWING TOGETHER. Here is where you will process as a group the teaching you heard and saw. The focus won't be on accumulating information but on how we should live in light of the Word of God. We want to help you apply the insights from Scripture practically, creatively and from your heart as well as your head. At the end of the day, allowing the timeless truths from God's Word to transform our lives in Christ is our greatest aim.

GOING DEEPER. If you have time and want to dig deeper into more Bible passages about the topic at hand, we've provided additional passages and questions. Your group may choose to do study homework ahead of each meeting in order to cover more biblical material. If you prefer not to do study homework, the Going Deeper section will provide you with plenty to discuss within the group. These options allow individuals or the whole group to expand their study, while still accommodating those who can't do homework or are new to your group.

DAILY DEVOTIONS. Each week on the Daily Reflections pages we provide Scriptures to read and reflect on between group meetings. We suggest you use this section to seek God on your own throughout the week. This time at home should begin and end with prayer. Don't get in a hurry; take enough time to hear God's direction.

SESSION ONE

Rooted in Christ



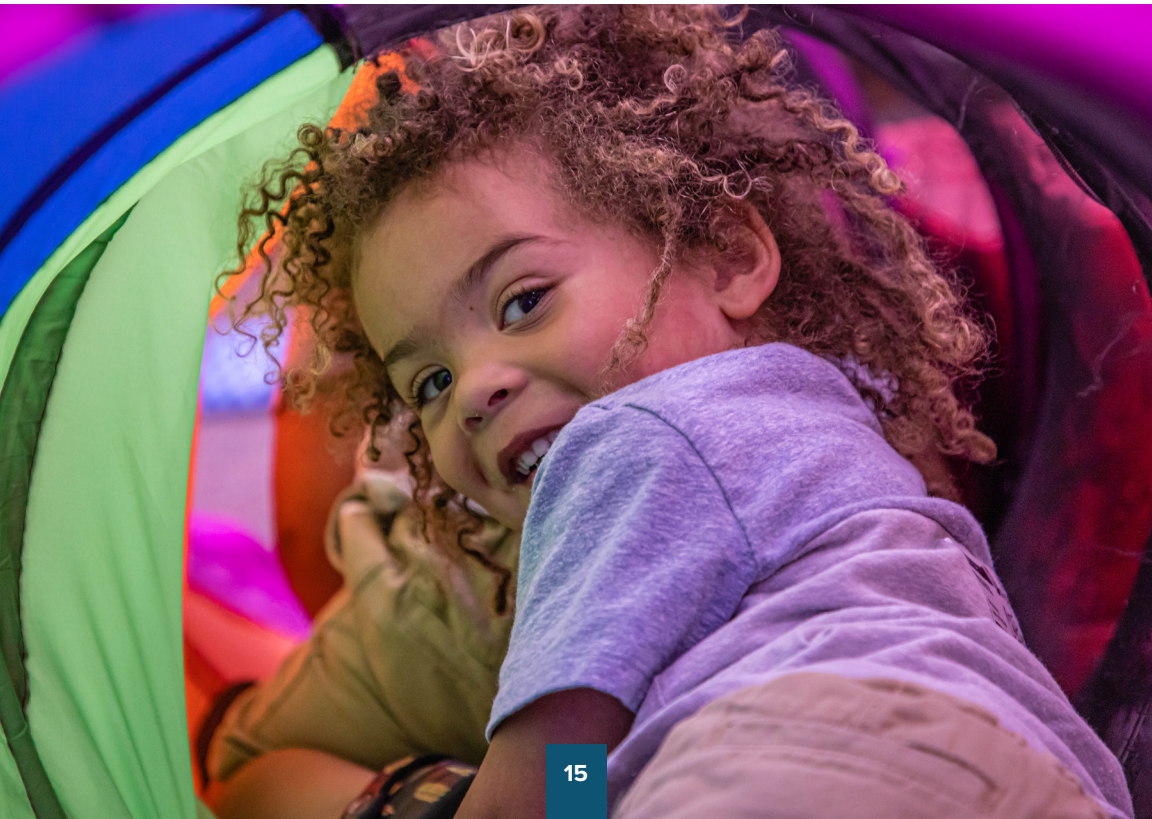
*Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them
will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.*

MATTHEW 7:24

Welcome to Flourishing Family!

In this first session today, we will go back to the basics and be reminded that a Flourishing Family is built upon the foundation of the Gospel alone. We will be reminded how much we need Jesus and for His grace to be offered and received in our homes on a daily basis. Also, in this group guide, we have given you some extra resources to check out, so don't miss that section each week. We hope you will join us each week for what may be the very most important conversation at this stage in your life. Let's get started!

Enjoy the company around you on this brief journey and remember that the next few weeks are a short chapter in a larger story God is writing in your life. Let's discover together what it means to live in such a way that steps we take keep our Families Flourishing no matter what our situation. Family is a big deal to God since it was His idea. We need strong and flourishing families made up of strong marriages and godly parenting.





During each session, we will begin with a question or brief activity designed to “put us on the same page” for the session. Since this is your first time together (at least for this new series), take a few minutes to make sure everyone knows names. You may want to review briefly the Small Group Agreement and Calendar from the Appendix.

- As you begin, take time to pass around a copy of the Small Group Roster on page 91, a sheet of paper, or have someone pass a Study Guide, opened to the Small Group Roster. Have everyone write down their contact information. Ask someone to make copies or type up a list with everyone's information and email it to the group this week.
- As you can tell by the title of this series, we're going to talk about family in the next few weeks. Flourishing Families consist of strong marriages and biblical parenting. Let's begin by talking about your ideas of what God cares about when it comes to marriage and family. What do you consider to be biblical principles of a Flourishing Family?
- Whether your group is new or ongoing, it's always important to reflect on and review your values together. On page 78 is a Small Group Agreement with the values we've found most useful in sustaining healthy, balanced groups. We recommend that you choose one or two values—ones you haven't previously focused on or have room to grow in—to emphasize during this study. Choose ones that will take your group to the next stage of intimacy and spiritual health.
- If your group is new, you may want to focus on welcoming newcomers or on sharing group ownership. Any group will quickly move from being the leader's group to our group if everyone understands the goals of the group and shares a small role. See the Purpose Team Roles in Appendix for help on how to do this well.
- We've come to realize that healthy groups rotate leadership. This helps to develop every member's ability to shepherd a few people in a safe environment. Even Jesus gave others the opportunity to serve alongside him (Mark 6:30–44). Look at the FAQs in the Appendix for additional information about hosting or leading the group.



learning together

WATCH THE VIDEO

Use the space provided below to record key thoughts, questions and things you want to remember or follow up on. After watching the video, have someone read the discussion questions and the Growing Together section and direct the discussion among the group. As you go through each of the subsequent sections, ask someone else to read the questions and direct the discussion.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



growing together

In the questions that follow, you will review and expand on the teaching you just experienced.

- What is convicting or inspiring to you from today's passage?
- What is your personal faith story and relationship with Jesus?
- Can you tell us about a time that someone showed grace to you?
- Thinking about Ben's story of building the epic backyard fort for his kids, what was the part that he spent the longest building?
- We need a solid foundation for building a life, but what are some of the faulty foundations we might be tempted to build our lives upon?



Ephesians 3:14-19

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

- Reading Ephesians 3:14-19 again, what is the most encouraging part to you?
- Ben talked about what happens when we don't build our lives on a strong foundation, and how we start to run on empty. What are the early warning signs you see when you are "running on empty"?
- God our Father shows us love and grace and calls us to the same for our kids, but sometimes it's hard. When/how do you struggle to show love and grace to your kids?
- God is more interested in our spiritual formation than He is about behavior modification. This is a great model for us as parents. Why do you suppose is it easier to default to behavior modification tactics vs. spiritual formation strategies?

going deeper

If there is time, and you feel God nudging you to go deeper, take some time in group or by yourself before the next meeting to dig further into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own and jot your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations. You may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

In Matthew 7:24-27 (ESV) it says,

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

- What does Jesus mean by the contrast between building a house on a rock versus building a house on the sand?
- What are some areas of your life that you see people typically building on sand?
- What is one area of your own life where you may have built on sand and need to begin putting Jesus' words into practice?

resources

BOOKS

“Shepherding a Child’s Heart” by Paul Tripp

“Gospel Centered Marriage” by Tim Chester

“Grace Based Parenting” by Tim Kimmel

AUDIBLE

“Parenting: The 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family” by Paul Tripp

RIGHTNOW MEDIA

“Parenting” by Paul Tripp

“Grace Based Parenting” by Tim Kimmel

“House or Home: Marriage Edition” by Chip Ingram

PODCAST

“Reaching Your Child’s Heart When They Disobey” by Ginger Hubbard

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/episodes/broadcast/reaching-your-childs-heart-when-they-disobey/>

daily

REFLECTIONS

Read and reflect on the following Scriptures between group meetings. Use this section to seek God on your own throughout the week. This time at home should begin and end with prayer. Don't get in a hurry; take enough time to hear God's direction.

Day 1

2 Corinthians 12:9

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Reflect:

What areas of your life have caused you to lean on the sufficiency of God's grace?

Day 2

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Reflect:

Where have you seen this verse to be true in your life? Where could you apply it next?

Day 3

2 Corinthians 9:8

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

Reflect:

How often do you consider that your “every good work” is made possible by the grace of God giving you “sufficiency in all things at all times”? Where do you need His grace today?

Day 4

Romans 5:8

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Reflect:

Do you struggle to accept that God loves you? How encouraging is it to consider Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross for you because He loved you?

Day 5

1 John 3:1

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Reflect:

If you have children, reflect on your love for them. Is it difficult to imagine the Father loving you that way? If you don’t have children, imagine that you did.

SESSION TWO

Chicken
or Egg



*What therefore God has joined together,
let not man separate.*

MARK 10:9

Welcome once again to Flourishing Family. In our previous session, we delved into the essential foundation of Jesus Christ for building our families. Continuing our exploration of creating thriving families, our focus shifts this week to addressing the delicate balance between nurturing our marriages and navigating the responsibilities of parenthood. We know that the well-being of the parents contributes directly to well-being of our children. It can't be overstated that the health of the marriage is vital to this.

Pastor Ben will guide us through a look at Genesis, uncovering God's original blueprint for a Flourishing Family. This session is designed to spark authentic sharing as you openly discuss your personal challenges within your small group. Remember to consult the supplementary resources provided in this group guidebook and persist in championing your family's welfare throughout the week!







coming together

During each session, we will begin with a question or brief activity designed to “put us on the same page” for the session.

- So which do you think came first in creation, the chicken, or the egg?
- Tell us about something sweet or funny that happened at your wedding ceremony.



Learning Together

WATCH THE VIDEO



growing together

In the questions that follow, you will review and expand on the teaching you just experienced.

- What stands out to you from “the first wedding ceremony” in Genesis 2?
- What were your first months or years like in marriage?
- How did your marriage relationship change (for better or worse) when you had kid(s)?
- What is/was your parent’s marriage relationship like?



- Of Ben's TIME acronym (Time, Intimacy, Make it Known, Expectations), which do you find to be the most challenging in your marriage relationship?
- What habits and rhythms do you have in place to keep prioritizing a health marriage while bust parenting?

Hebrews 13:4

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

- Sexual intimacy is extremely important for a healthy marriage. In what ways does sexual impurity, such as looking at pornography, hurt marital intimacy?

going deeper

If there is time, and you feel God nudging you to go deeper, take some time in group or by yourself before the next meeting to dig further into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own and jot your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations. You may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

In Ephesians 5:31-33 (ESV) it says,

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

- What do you think is meant by “hold fast to his wife”? What might be some practical ways to hold fast to one another?
- Do you think it makes a difference that the husband is to love his wife, and the wife is to respect her husband? Why or why not?

resources

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 7:1-5

BOOKS

“Making Your Marriage a Fortress”, “Married Sex”
and “Sacred Marriage” by Gary Thomas

RIGHTNOW MEDIA

“A Lifelong Love” by Gary Thomas

PODCAST

Gary Thomas on FamilyLife

<https://www.familylife.com/podcast/guest/gary-thomas/>



daily



Read and reflect on the following Scriptures between group meetings. Use this section to seek God on your own throughout the week. This time at home should begin and end with prayer. Don't get in a hurry; take enough time to hear God's direction.

Day 1

Hebrews 13:4

"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous."

Reflect:

Do you think marriage is held in honor among all in today's culture? How does that effect your own view of marriage?

Day 2

Proverbs 18:22

"He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord."

Reflect:

Do you see your spouse as a sign of God's favor? How can you be a sign of God's favor for your spouse?

reflections

Day 3

Matthew 19:9

“And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

Reflect:

Why do you think Jesus said this, and what do you think He meant by it?

Day 4

Malachi 2:14

“But you say, ‘Why does he not?’ Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.”

Reflect:

What does Malachi mean by the word, “covenant”? Where else do we see covenants in the Bible?

Day 5

Deuteronomy 24:5

“When a man is newly married, he shall not go out with the army or be liable for any other public duty. He shall be free at home one year to be happy with his wife whom he has taken.”

Reflect:

Why do you think God gave the Israelites this provision? How could it be applied today, even to those not going to the army?

SESSION THREE

Trophies and Triumphs



*Discipline your son, and he will give you rest;
he will give delight to your heart*

PROVERBS 29:17

During our last session, we delved into the delicate balance between nurturing our marriage bond to ensure its growth and tending to the daily and crucial needs of our children, maintaining the functionality of our home. We hope that since then, you've had a chance to indulge in a date night or a tranquil moment over a morning coffee to reestablish your connection. If not, make sure to set aside time for that!

In today's session, Pastor Ben will refresh our memory with a pivotal Scripture from the Old Testament. This passage acts as a guiding principle, helping us evaluate how we allocate our time, financial resources, and energy. We sincerely hope you're regularly engaging with your small group on these highly significant topics and offering each other the necessary support along this journey. Both managing a marriage and raising children that thrive and flourish demand immense effort, and attempting them in isolation isn't sustainable. Our connectedness is crucial, so let's remain intertwined this week and delve into today's focal point: "Trophies and Triumphs."







coming together

During each session, we will begin with a question or brief activity designed to “put us on the same page” for the session.

- Do you still have any old trophies or medals from past accomplishments? How important were those activities to you at the time you won them?
- What has been your experience juggling spiritual activities with secular activities (such as sports and clubs)?



learning together

WATCH THE VIDEO

Use the space provided below to record key thoughts, questions and things you want to remember or follow up on. After watching the video, have someone read the discussion questions and the Growing Together section and direct the discussion among the group. As you go through each of the subsequent sections, ask someone else to read the questions and direct the discussion.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



growing together

In the questions that follow, you will review and expand on the teaching you just experienced.

- How would you put into your own words the choice that Joshua is describing in today's passage (Josh 24:14-15)?
- How do we express sincerity and faithfulness in practical terms when leading our families?
- What are the things in our day/culture that we need to "put away"?
- What are the "time suckers" in your family's schedule that you struggle with?



going deeper

If there is time, and you feel God nudging you to go deeper, take some time in group or by yourself before the next meeting to dig further into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own and jot your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations. You may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

In Deuteronomy 6:4-7 (ESV) it says,

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”

- What do you think it means for these words to “be on your heart”?
- What are some practical ways to obey this command to you teach God’s words “diligently to your children”?
- What sort of evidence would you look for to see that your children “love the Lord...with all [their] heart...soul...and...might”?
- In Luke 6:38 it says, “Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.” How can we teach our children the value of generosity? What are some ideas you could try to help them practice this?

resources

BOOK

“Fearless Parenting” by George Barna

RIGHTNOW MEDIA

“House or Home: Parenting Edition” by Chip Ingram

“Parenting” by Al Mohler.

PODCAST

“Passing Your Faith on to Your Kids” By Matt Chandler

[https://www.focusonthefamily.com/episodes/broadcast/
passing-your-faith-on-to-your-kids/](https://www.focusonthefamily.com/episodes/broadcast/passing-your-faith-on-to-your-kids/)



daily



Read and reflect on the following Scriptures between group meetings. Use this section to seek God on your own throughout the week. This time at home should begin and end with prayer. Don't get in a hurry; take enough time to hear God's direction.

Day 1

Proverbs 22:6

"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."

Reflect:

God's Word encourages us to be attentive to teaching our children to follow God. What are some ways you have done that and could do that in the future?

Day 2

Proverbs 23:13-14

"Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol."

Reflect:

Spanking is more controversial than ever today, but disciplining children is not optional. What possible consequences are there if we don't love our children enough to discipline them?

reflections

Day 3

3 John 1:4

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."

Reflect:

John was talking about his "spiritual" children, those he shepherded as a pastor, but this verse applies even more so to our earthly children. How could you increase the chances that your children will "walk in the truth"?

Day 4

Psalms 127:3-5

"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate."

Reflect:

Parenting is not always easy. It's helpful to remember that children are a blessing. Is there anything you can think to do that would make parenting feel more like a blessing? Anything God could do? Pray about it.

Day 5

Colossians 3:21

"Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged."

Reflect:

Consider what it may mean to "provoke your children" and discourage them.

SESSION FOUR

To Shelter
or Not to
Shelter



*And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus,
and you will be saved, you and your household."*

ACTS 16:3

Welcome back for the fourth week of our journey to build Flourishing Families. We sincerely hope that you're engaged in profound and enriching dialogues within your households concerning the biblical principles we've been exploring. We're optimistic that you're in the process of cultivating fresh routines and patterns that are fostering positive transformations and advancement in your family dynamics and relationships.

During our previous session, we delved into the concept of the trophies we pursue and how we establish our priorities. Today, we're about to embark on what might be the most challenging conversation of this series. Pastor Ben will be guiding us through the topic of choosing to shelter or not to shelter our kids from the world. In this discussion, we will address the immensely tough choices that all parents are grappling with in these times as we strive to nurture virtuous and godly children within an increasingly secular world. This session will provide practical insights that you'll want to revisit repeatedly.

Remember to peruse the supplementary resources in the study guide's additional section, which includes books, videos, and podcasts, to complement your learning experience. Again, we are so glad you're with us on this journey.







coming together

During each session, we will begin with a question or brief activity designed to “put us on the same page” for the session.

- To what degree did your own parents shelter you? Would they have been considered “free-range” parents, “helicopter” parents, or somewhere in between?
- What have been the greatest challenges for you regarding sheltering your own kids from the world?



learning together

WATCH THE VIDEO



growing together

In the questions that follow, you will review and expand on the teaching you just experienced.

- Where has your family encountered the “counsel of the wicked” or the “seat of scoffers”?
- What disciplines and rhythms has your family developed to stay grounded in God’s Word? What does it look like practically?
- How do you think Psalm 1 informs decisions we make for our kids like: school choice, entertainment, smart phones, social media, etc...?
- How much freedom do you give your kids in relation to time with friends?



going deeper

If there is time, and you feel God nudging you to go deeper, take some time in group or by yourself before the next meeting to dig further into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own and jot your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations. You may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

In Matthew 18:1-6 (ESV) it says,

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

- Why do you think Jesus used a child to illustrate the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?
- Who do you think Jesus meant by “one of these little ones” (v.6)?
- How might these verses be applied to the question of how much to shelter your children?
- Where might we over-shelter in our effort not to “cause one of these little ones” to sin?

resources

BOOK

“Social Media and Depression” by Gregory Jantz

“The Tech-Wise Family” by Andy Crouch

RIGHTNOW MEDIA

“Parenting and Technology” by Kathy Koch

“Parenting a Teen in a Social Media World”

by Annie F. Downs

PODCAST

“Screen Time: Less is More” by Jonathan McKnee

[https://www.focusonthefamily.com/episodes/broadcast/
screen-time-less-is-more/](https://www.focusonthefamily.com/episodes/broadcast/screen-time-less-is-more/)



daily



Read and reflect on the following Scriptures between group meetings. Use this section to seek God on your own throughout the week. This time at home should begin and end with prayer. Don't get in a hurry; take enough time to hear God's direction.

Day 1

Psalm 138:7

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand delivers me."

Reflect:

This verse is about the way God shelters us by delivering us from our enemies. Do you think there is any balance of sheltering versus allowing our kids to manage themselves that we can learn from the way God "parents" us?

Day 2

Psalm 146:9

"The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin."

Reflect:

Our Father watches over us and upholds us. What are some ways we can watch over and uphold our own children?

reflections

Day 3

Isaiah 54:3

“For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities.”

Reflect:

Do you think this passage shows us encouragement for sending our children out “to the right and to the left” to possess the nations? Do you see anything practical in this verse about the topic of how much to shelter our children, especially as they get older?

Day 4

Isaiah 54:13

“All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children.”

Reflect:

How does the Lord teach our children?

Day 5

Isaiah 45:25

“For thus says the Lord: ‘Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken, and the prey of the tyrant be rescued, for I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children.’”

Reflect:

How encouraging is it that God promises to contend with those to contend with us and save our children? In what ways do you struggle to believe that?

SESSION FIVE

Kids on a Mission



For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.

GENESIS 18:19

Welcome back for our concluding session of Flourishing Family! We hope you've had a wonderful time coming together each week, supporting one another on our journey through the Bible on marriage and parenthood. As the Bible says, "iron sharpens iron," and we trust you've experienced this sharpening effect during our shared time. In our previous session, we engaged in a fruitful discussion about guiding our children for the challenges of the world while maintaining a balance in safeguarding them. Today, we will conclude the series with the topic "Kids On a Mission!" This captures the essence of our purpose: preparing our children to venture into the world and make a meaningful impact for Jesus Christ. Pastor Ben will guide us in encouraging our children to embrace a life of service and the proclamation of the Gospel from an early age. Thank you for joining us again today. We sincerely hope you'll find inspiration and motivation to foster growth as a family.

Remember to peruse the supplementary resources in the study guide's additional section, which includes books, videos, and podcasts, to complement your learning experience.







coming together

During each session, we will begin with a question or brief activity designed to “put us on the same page” for the session.

- Were you ever taught to share your faith as a child? Was there any one specific method for doing so? How did it go for you?
- What has been the most difficult part of sharing your own faith with others?



learning together

WATCH THE VIDEO



growing together

In the questions that follow, you will review and expand on the teaching you just experienced.

- Why do you think it's important to connect your kids to "the least of these"?
- How does serving those less fortunate impact a child's worldview?
- How best can we teach our kids to be "others centered"?
- Have you ever been on a family mission trip? How did it go?
- Are you aware of local missions opportunities to serve together as a family? Which ones do you feel most drawn to?
- What is a tangible next step you can take to get your kids on mission?





going deeper

If there is time, and you feel God nudging you to go deeper, take some time in group or by yourself before the next meeting to dig further into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own and jot your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations. You may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

In Luke 10:2 (ESV) it says,

And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

- What is the context of this verse, and how might you apply it to your own life that of your kids?
- How often do you pray for God to send your children out as workers for the harvest? Spend some time now praying that He would do that.

resources

BOOK

“Raising Kingdom Kids” by Tony Evans

RIGHTNOW MEDIA

“Raising Engaged Kids” by Chris Browne

“Raising Kingdom Kids” by Tony Evans

PODCAST

“5 Ways to Teach Kids About Missions”

<https://www.imb.org/2019/05/27/>

5-ways-teach-kids-missions/



daily



Read and reflect on the following Scriptures between group meetings. Use this section to seek God on your own throughout the week. This time at home should begin and end with prayer. Don't get in a hurry; take enough time to hear God's direction.

Day 1

Ephesians 2:10

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Reflect:

What good works do you think God has prepared for you and your family to walk in?

Day 2

Romans 15:5-6

"May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Reflect:

Pray that God would bring your family into unity concerning being mission to the world.

reflections

Day 3

Galatians 6:9

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”

Reflect:

It may seem frustrating at first when you are trying to teach your children to be on mission, but don't give up. Keep teaching and keep praying. God promises a season of reaping.

Day 4

Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Reflect:

Pray that God would save your children and give them the Holy Spirit. Talk to your children about what your local version of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the world would be. Perhaps it is the neighbors, the kids at school, the people they know online, and across the world on a mission trip.

Day 5

1 Samuel 1:27-28

“For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition that I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he is lent to the Lord.’ And he worshiped the Lord there.”

Reflect:

It's powerful to think of lending our children to the Lord. Pray for your kids. Ask God to call them to Himself and shape them for whatever His purpose is for their lives.

A dark, blue-toned photograph of a crowd of people at night. Many people have their hands raised in the air, suggesting a concert or a large gathering. The word "Appen" is written in a large, white, cursive script across the middle of the image.

Appen



Indices



frequently

ASKED QUESTIONS

What do we do on the first night of our group?

Like all fun things in life—have a party! A “get to know you” coffee, dinner, or dessert is a great way to launch a new study. You may want to review the Group Agreement (page 78) and share the names of a few friends you can invite to join you. But most importantly, have fun before your study time begins.

Can we do this study on our own?

Absolutely! This may sound crazy, but one of the best ways to do this study is not with a full house but with a few friends. You may choose to gather with another couple or a few friends who would go out to dinner and then walking through this study.

What if this group is not working for me?

You’re not alone! This could be the result of a personality conflict, life stage difference, geographical distance, level of spiritual maturity, or any number of things. Relax. Pray for God’s direction, and at the end of the study, decide whether to continue with this group or find another. However, don’t bail out before the four weeks are up; God might have something to teach you. And don’t run from conflict or prejudge people before you have given them a chance. God is still working in your life, too!

Who is the leader?

Most groups have an official leader. But ideally, the group will mature and members will rotate the leadership of meetings. We have discovered that healthy groups rotate hosts/leaders and homes on a regular basis. This model ensures that all members grow, give their unique contribution, and develop their gifts. This study guide and the

Holy Spirit can keep things on track even when you rotate leaders. Christ has promised to be in your midst as you gather. Ultimately, God is your leader each step of the way.

How do we handle the childcare needs in our group?

Very carefully. Seriously, this can be a sensitive issue. We suggest that you empower the group to openly brainstorm solutions. You may try one option that works for a while and then adjust over time. Our favorite approach is for adults to meet in the living room or dining room and to share the cost of a babysitter (or two) who can watch the kids in a different part of the house. This way, parents don't have to be away from their children all evening when their children are too young to be left at home. A second option is to use one home for the kids and a second home (close by or a phone call away) for the adults. A third idea is to rotate the responsibility of providing a lesson or care for the children either in the same home or in another home nearby. This can be an incredible blessing for kids. Finally, the most common solution is to decide that you need to have a night to invest in your spiritual lives individually or as a couple and to make your own arrangements for childcare. No matter what decision the group makes, the best approach is to dialogue openly about both the problem and the solution.





small

GROUP AGREEMENT

OUR PURPOSE

To provide an environment where participants experience authentic community and spiritual growth.

OUR VALUES

Group Attendance

To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent. (Completing the Group Calendar on page 80 will minimize this issue.)

Safe Environment

To create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)

Respect Differences

To be gentle and gracious to fellow group members with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments, or “imperfections.” We are all works in progress.

Confidentiality

To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.

Encouragement for Growth

To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our life by serving others with our God-given gifts.

Shared Ownership

To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attendee will share a small team role or responsibility over time.

Rotating Hosts/Leaders and Homes

To encourage different people to host the group in their homes and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating each meeting. (See the Group Calendar on page 80.)

OUR REMINDERS

- Refreshments/mealtimes
 - Childcare
 - When we will meet (day of week)
 - Where we will meet (place)
 - We will begin at (time) and end at
 - We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together.
 - Our primary worship service time will be
 - Date of this agreement
 - Date we will review this agreement again
 - Who (other than the leader) will review this agreement?
-

small

GROUP CALENDAR

Planning and calendaring can help ensure the greatest participation at every meeting. At the end of each meeting, review this calendar. Be sure to include a regular rotation of host homes and leaders, and don't forget birthdays, socials, church events, holidays, and mission/ministry projects.

MEETING DATE	LESSON NUMBER	HOST HOME	DESSERT/ MEAL	GROUP LEADER
Monday Jan. 15	1	Steve & Laura's	Joe	Bill

**CUT & REVIEW
THE MEMORY VERSES
ON THE OTHER SIDE
OF THIS PAGE.**

cut

Session One

*Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them
will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.*

MATTHEW 7:24

Session Two

What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.

MARK 10:9

Session Three

*Discipline your son, and he will give you rest;
he will give delight to your heart.*

PROVERBS 29:17

Session Four

*And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus,
and you will be saved, you and your household"*

PROVERBS 29:17

Session Five

*For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and
his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing
righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what
he has promised him.*

GENESIS 18:19



A man with short dark hair and glasses is shown from the chest up, wearing a black zip-up hoodie and blue jeans. He is sitting on a light-colored rock ledge. The background is a blurred forest of green trees under a grey, overcast sky. Fine raindrops are visible falling throughout the scene. The text 'Small Gro' is overlaid in a white, cursive font across the middle of the image.

Small Gro

A photograph of three young adults laughing joyfully outdoors. The person in the center is a woman with long dark hair, wearing a brown sweater and a black jacket. To her right is another woman with long dark hair, wearing a black jacket over a red and black plaid shirt. To the left is a man with glasses, wearing a black jacket. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a grey sky. The text 'up Leaders' is overlaid in a white, cursive font across the middle of the image.

up Leaders



hosting

AN OPEN HOUSE

If you're starting a new group, try planning an "open house" before your first formal group meeting. Even if you have only two to four core members, it's a great way to break the ice and to consider prayerfully who else might be open to joining you over the next few weeks. You can also use this kick-off meeting to hand out study guides, spend some time getting to know each other, discuss each person's expectations for the group and briefly pray for each other.

A simple meal or good desserts always make a kick-off meeting more fun. After people introduce themselves and share how they ended up being at the meeting (you can play a game to see who has the wildest story!), have everyone respond to a few icebreaker questions:

- What is your favorite family vacation?
- What is one thing you love about your church/our community?
- What are three things about your life growing up that most people here don't know?

Finally, set an open chair (maybe two) in the center of your group and explain that it represents someone who would enjoy or benefit from this group but who isn't here yet.

Ask people to pray about inviting someone to join the group over the next few weeks. Hand out postcards and have everyone write an invitation or two. Don't worry about ending up with too many people; you can always have one discussion circle in the living room and another in the dining room after you watch the lesson. Each group could then report prayer requests and progress at the end of the session.

You can skip this kick-off meeting if your time is limited, but you'll experience a huge benefit if you take the time to connect with each other in this way.



Leading

FOR THE
FIRST TIME

Sweaty palms are a healthy sign. The Bible says God is gracious to the humble. Remember who is in control; the time to worry is when you're not worried. Those who are soft in heart (and sweaty palmed) are those whom God is sure to speak through.

Seek support. Ask your leader, co-leader, or close friend to pray for you and prepare with you before the session. Walking through the study will help you anticipate potentially difficult questions and discussion topics.

Bring your uniqueness to the study. Lean into who you are and how God wants you to uniquely lead the study.

Prepare. Review the session material. If you are using the videos, listen to the teaching segment. Don't wait until the last minute to prepare.

Ask for feedback so you can grow. Perhaps in an email or on cards handed out at the study, have everyone write down three things you did well and one thing you could improve on. Demonstrate an openness to learn and grow.

Prayerfully consider launching a new group. This doesn't need to happen overnight, but keep growth as a goal. Not all Christians are called to be leaders or teachers, but we are all called to be "shepherds" of a few someday.

Share with your group what God is doing in your heart. God is searching for those whose hearts are fully His. Share your trials and victories. We promise that people will relate.

prayer

& PRAISE REPORT

	PRAYER REQUEST	PRAISE REPORT
SESSION 1		
SESSION 2		
SESSION 3		
SESSION 4		



About

BEN & KELLI HAYS

Ben and Kelli Hays have been married for over two decades and have been serving together in ministry for even longer. They have six children, ages 4 to 18. Ben and Kelli have served in churches in Texas and also around the world on mission trips, especially working in East Africa among the Massai tribe to bring theological education and access to healthcare to an extremely marginalized area.

Ben is a graduate of Stephen F. Austin State University in Texas with a Bachelor of Business Administration, and also a graduate of Pensacola Theological Seminary with a Master of Arts in Biblical Exposition.

Kelli is a graduate of East Texas Baptist University with a Bachelor of Arts in Christian Ministry and a focus in Christian counseling. Kelli is also currently a student of the University of Texas Health Sciences Center in Houston and will soon graduate with a Master of Public Health with a major in health promotion and behavioral science, and an additional certificate in maternal child health.

Ben currently serves on the staff at CityRise in Houston, TX as the young adults pastor and a teaching pastor. Ben was formerly a church planter, church planting coach, and church planting strategist before joining the team at CityRise.

Flourishing FAMILY

At CityRise, we are passionate about investing in your family and giving you the tools and support you need to flourish in your marriage and in your parenting journey.

Today, more than ever, our families are facing enormous challenges from every side in the cultural storm in which we live. Over the next 5 weeks, we are going to engage in some real talk and dig into some biblical instructions as we fight for the health of our families together.



BEN & KELLI HAYS CITYRISE NETWORK

Ben and Kelli Hays have been married for over two decades and have been serving together in ministry for even longer. They have six children, ages 4 to 18. Ben and Kelli have served in churches in Texas and also around the world on mission trips, especially working in East Africa among the Massai tribe to bring theological education and access to healthcare to an extremely marginalized area.

Ben is a graduate of Stephen F. Austin State University in Texas with a Bachelor of Business Administration, and also a graduate of Pensacola Theological Seminary with a Master of Arts in Biblical Exposition.

Kelli is a graduate of East Texas Baptist University with a Bachelor of Arts in Christian Ministry and a focus in Christian counseling. Kelli is also currently a student of the University of Texas Health Sciences Center in Houston and will soon graduate with a Master of Public Health with a major in health promotion and behavioral science, and an additional certificate in maternal child health.

Ben currently serves on the staff at CityRise in Houston, TX as the young adults pastor and a teaching pastor. Ben was formerly a church planter, church planting coach, and church planting strategist before joining the team at CityRise.

www.cityrise.org



FLOURISHING
LIFE JOURNEY

lifetogether