

it's complicated!

- Preparation:** (1) Have strips of paper with printed scenarios children deal with [provided below, but must be copied] ready to pass out.
(2) Have blank half-sheets prepared to pass out, as well [you will need to provide those yourself]
(3) Ahead of time, look at the church's FaithPath, which is an online guide for parents. Go to rushcreek.org/faithpath and get familiar with it ahead of time, as you will be working with this link in your group time. In particular, you will want to preview the segments noted at the bottom of p. 3, which will take about 12 minutes altogether. Plan to show your group the first clip mentioned. Then, choose 2 or 3 others, depending on the ages of the children represented in your group.

the win

Group members will take steps toward taking an active role in helping their children become responsible disciples by seizing teaching opportunities as they arise, by scheduling regular teaching opportunities and by planning special teaching opportunities.

1 minute

sermon recap: what did the text mean? what does it mean?

In the message this week we learned parenting is our opportunity to pass on our faith to the next generation.

4-6 minutes

warm up

Do This:

- Have everyone get out their cell phones.
- Say, "Without getting into politics, within 3 minutes, locate the 3 headlines that frighten you the most."
- Ask everyone to share their headlines and keep them up on their phones.

Say This:

Let's project our culture ahead 10 years. If current trends continue, what will the world be like then? Revise your headlines accordingly. Be creative, even though the results will probably make everyone uncomfortable. Picture your child/children being a primary influence in reversing the trends you project. What ways would you like to see your children responding to these trends as an agent of change? What kinds of specific actions can you take to prepare him or her to be that agent of change?

the text: what does it mean for me?

Say This:

Let's begin our study by looking at Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Let's read it out loud together.

Leader Tip:

This verse will be printed out for group members on their member guide.

Read This:

Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, The Lord is one!

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Say This:

From what we see in our society, most people do *not* love God with all their hearts. Many people don't love God *at all!* This creates a dilemma: The overwhelming number of people who don't love God creates a gravitational pull downward. Without a corrective agent, the next generation will tend to get pulled down by the influence of others around them.

Ask this:

What are some ways we feel the gravitational pull?

Say this: In order help the next generation resist this gravitational pull, we need a strategy.

A lot of us are familiar with the previous passage, but many people don't know that the next two verses *contain a strategy* to help parents prepare their children to stand against the gravitational pull and even be agents to reverse it.

Let's read the next two verses, Deuteronomy 6:6-7, together.

Leader Tip:

This verse will be printed out for the group on their sheet.

Read This:

These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart.

Repeat them to your children.

Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Then Say This:

This strategy unfolds in three phases. Look carefully at this passage.

What is the first action, found in the first line, that is to be put into play, even before the children are involved?

Leader Tip:

You're looking for something like: The parents hold the commands of God in their own hearts first.

Ask This:

What then is the first step in coaching our children to be agents of change?

Leader Tip:

You're looking for something like: We ourselves review the commands of God over and over until they are in our own hearts.

Ask This:

Then what is the next step, found in the second line?

Leader Tip:

You're looking for something like: The parents repeat God's commands over and over to their children.

Ask this:

What are some of the most important commands that children need to learn, to stand against the gravitational pull?

Say this:

Okay, then what is the third step, according to the next line?

Notice that parents are to discuss God's commands as they go about their day together, seizing on teachable moments.

Leader Tip:

Be sensitive to single parents in your group who may not have the time with their children that they wish to have. Feel free to word things differently in order to accommodate their situation.

Ask this:

According to this passage, who is tasked with the responsibility of coaching the next generation spiritually?

Leader Tip:

Hopefully, everyone will say “parents,” but stress that it is *not* the *church* that is primarily responsible, but *parents*.

Ask This:

When parents don’t coach their children, who usually ends up training them instead?

Say this: So the biblical strategy for spiritually coaching our children is:

- Review regularly (to self)
- Repeat regularly (to kids)
- Seize on the teachable moments

25-28
minutes

digging deeper

Do this:

Pass out strips of paper that describe scenarios that children are facing today [see below, need to be copied].

Have everyone break up into groups of 3-4 people for discussion.

Allow for about 3 minute of discussion, then call them back together to share their findings.

Say This:

From what we are saying, coaching our children to be agents of change calls for intentionality.

It involves more than just bringing them to church and helping them cope with situations they face as they grow older.

The goal is to help them become *agents of change*.

Ask this:

Why do we tend to rely on the church to coach our children, instead of taking a personal, active role as parents?

What are some of the reasons we are not more intentional in coaching our children spiritually?

Do This:

Pass out blank half-sheets of paper, and have everyone plot out a typical week on their half-sheet.

Have them add up the number of waking hours each day of the week that they are home with their children.

Then ask them to find the best time in their schedule to regularly (daily, if possible) train the child more formally.

Leader Tip:

At this point, stress that, for younger children, this may work best with a children’s Bible, with pictures.

With older children, it might involve simply reading the Bible to them, beginning with the New Testament, then the Old.

Say This:

We have talked about seizing teaching opportunities as they arise, and about scheduling regular teaching opportunities.

Let’s explore ways we can create special teaching opportunities at strategic times in our children’s lives.

Do This:

Log onto rushcreek.org/faithpath. Click on the video link at the top and show the segment 11:00 to 13:00.

Next, show 2-3 of the following links, matching the ages of children in the families present:

Age Clip on Video that Matches that Age

3 19:55-20:49

5 19:50-20:25

7 11:32-12:46

9 11:02-11:36

11 10:44-11:39

13 10:47-11:50

16 4:49-7:37

All links except for this last one are about 30-60 seconds.

Ask This:

Which of these strategies spoke the most to you? If you were to apply that strategy in your home, what would it look like?

Do This:

Strongly encourage parents to get more ideas—to download the kits, watch the videos, etc. that match their child’s age.

1 minute

closing thought

Say this: Be encouraged! The gravitational pull is strong, but God’s Word is stronger! We can teach them to overcome!

Needed Resources Mentioned Above
Scenarios Children Deal With:

Younger Children, Scenario 1

After your scenario is read, discuss what values are important for children to learn in that situation.

Ask, In what specific ways could a parent turn that situation into a conversation about a particular command of God?

What counsel could be offered to help a child not only deal with the situation, but also be an agent of change?

Scenario: Your child mentions that three of his friend's parents are getting divorced and wants to know what to say to them.

Younger Children, Scenario 2

After your scenario is read, discuss what values are important for children to learn in that situation.

Ask, In what specific ways could a parent turn that situation into a conversation about a particular command of God?

What counsel could be offered to help a child not only deal with the situation, but also be an agent of change?

Scenario: Your daughter came back from sports camp, saying that she is the only one who didn't win a trophy for something. "They all tease me," she says. "They keep asking me why I have to be on their team."

Younger Children, Scenario 3

After your scenario is read, discuss what values are important for children to learn in that situation.

Ask, In what specific ways could a parent turn that situation into a conversation about a particular command of God?

What counsel could be offered to help a child not only deal with the situation, but also be an agent of change?

Scenario: Your son comes home after spending the night with friends. They watched two movies you have told him he is not to watch. "But it wasn't here that I watched it," he protests. "They're all Christians, and their parents said it was fine!"

Preteens, Scenario 1

After your scenario is read, discuss what values are important for children to learn in that situation.

Ask, In what specific ways could a parent turn that situation into a conversation about a particular command of God?

What counsel could be offered to help a child not only deal with the situation, but also be an agent of change?

Scenario: Your son tells you that the other boys won't sit with him at the lunch table. On the same day, the teacher sends you an email, telling you that he stands near the boys' table at lunch, crying because they won't let him sit down there.

Preteens, Scenario 2

After your scenario is read, discuss what values are important for children to learn in that situation.

Ask, In what specific ways could a parent turn that situation into a conversation about a particular command of God?

What counsel could be offered to help a child not only deal with the situation, but also be an agent of change?

Scenario: Your 10-year-old daughter gets in the habit of sneaking makeup out of the house and putting it on before she goes to school.

Preteens, Scenario 3

After your scenario is read, discuss what values are important for children to learn in that situation.

Ask, In what specific ways could a parent turn that situation into a conversation about a particular command of God?

What counsel could be offered to help a child not only deal with the situation, but also be an agent of change?

Scenario: Your son finds out about sex through his friends at school. Then you notice on his web history that he has graduated from playing games to discovering online pornography.

Teens, Scenario 1

After your scenario is read, discuss what values are important for children to learn in that situation.

Ask, In what specific ways could a parent turn that situation into a conversation about a particular command of God?

What counsel could be offered to help a child not only deal with the situation, but also be an agent of change?

Scenario: You find out that your son's friends are sending him pornographic pictures on his phone. He says he doesn't really want them, but they send them to him anyway.

Teens, Scenario 2

After your scenario is read, discuss what values are important for children to learn in that situation.

Ask, In what specific ways could a parent turn that situation into a conversation about a particular command of God? What counsel could be offered to help a child not only deal with the situation, but also be an agent of change?

Scenario: Your daughter tells you that two of her friends are struggling with gender identity. She says that this is not a big deal to them, and the teachers at school have affirmed them in their quest.

Teens, Scenario 3

After your scenario is read, discuss what values are important for children to learn in that situation.

Ask, In what specific ways could a parent turn that situation into a conversation about a particular command of God? What counsel could be offered to help a child not only deal with the situation, but also be an agent of change?

Scenario: Your 17-year-old son says that his friends are telling him that the Bible is a bunch of documents written by average people. He says that he still believes in God, but honestly wonders whether Jesus really is the only path to salvation.