



WEEK TWO

Ages & Stages

Pastor Jared Herd

June 10 & 11, 2017

LEADER'S GUIDE

1. What age or stage of parenting (or being a child) is or was the most challenging to you? Why?

If your group is mostly people who aren't parents or grandparents, you can focus on the "being a child" part of the question. Sometimes recalling in depth the stages of our childhood helps us navigate the stage of life we are in now or remind us something good we have forgotten.

2. Take a look at the verses from this weekend's message: Exodus 16:3, Exodus 17: 1-4, and Exodus 20:1-3.

Exodus 16:3 (NIV)

3 The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

Exodus 17:1-4 (NIV)

17 The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. 2 So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink."

Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?"

3 But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"

4 Then Moses cried out to the Lord, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."

Exodus 20:1-3 (NIV)

And God spoke all these words: 2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 3 "You shall have no other gods before me.

How was Israel after leaving Egypt like a young child being raised by a father?

Pastor Jared noted that Israel after her centuries of slavery in Egypt was like a newborn child, unfamiliar with how to make decisions, highly dependent on someone else to care for her, meet her very real needs, tutor her in the way to live life successfully. How did all those years of servitude condition the nation of Israel to think? How do we see Israel's childlike qualities in these verses?

How did God "parent" them?

Talk about how God met them in their current age and stage. How were the Ten Commandments (of which we see the first one in the above verse) the right directions at the right time?

3. What were the four ages and stages of our early lives that Pastor Jared spoke about? How is each one distinct?

The four ages and stages Pastor Jared spoke about showed what we are motivated by at each age and what we need from our parents at each stage:

1. Babies and toddlers are motivated by **safety** and they need their parents to fully **embrace** their need for security.
2. Adolescents are motivated by **fun** and they need their parents to **engage** in their interests.
3. Middle-schoolers are motivated by their need for **acceptance** and they need their parents to **affirm** them in their personal journey.
4. High-schoolers are motivated by **freedom** and they need their parents to help them **connect** with a higher purpose, their mission for their life.

Which one – either as former child or now as a parent – has been the most life-impacting to you personally?

Spend some time chatting about each one. If your group is past the parenting stage or hasn't entered it yet, talk about how all of us have been shaped by these ages and stages and that these formative years often inform our current decisions as adults.

4. What do you think it means to be consistent in someone's life as a key person of influence?

The dictionary definition for 'consistent' is actually rather cool: "unchanging in achievement or effect over a period of time." What does this look like in terms of our influence over someone who looks to us for guidance, whether it's a child, or a relative or a younger believer?

How much does consistency matter to you? Do you think it matters to God? Why?

Here are some great verses on how God values consistency (faithfulness, reliability, dependability)

Malachi 3:6 "I the LORD do not change."

James 1:17 "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

Here's a quote by pastor and author Greg Laurie if you want to talk about consistency and personal spiritual growth : "Jesus said, 'Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.' (John 15:4). That is the secret of spiritual growth: to abide. To abide means to stay in a given place. For believers, it means to maintain unbroken fellowship with God. It is regularity. It is consistency."

5. Think about the world in which kids are being raised today. Is the culture of the world different than God's ideal culture? How so?

You can tell a lot about a culture's distinctions by looking at what its occupants value. One way to discuss this question is to make a list of what God values (think back to the Garden of Eden as that was a perfect culture that God set up for Adam and Eve before they fell and everything changed.) Then make a list of what our current day culture values. How are they similar and how are they different?

6. What is it like to be young in the faith in our day and age? How are new believers like young people?

Talk about the physical needs spiritual infants in Christ have. (Need for knowledge, community, guidance, communion with God, worship, etc.)

How are they different?

Chat about how physical babies have no past experiences informing their choices but new believers in Christ bring with them their life experiences to date. There are things a new believer needs to put aside:

1 Peter 2:1-3 (NIV) Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. 2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

7. How does spiritual growth happen? Does it compare to how we grow physically from being a child to an adult?

Spiritual growth is an ongoing process that starts when a person is born again as a follower of Jesus. The Holy Spirit takes up residence within them and the maturing process begins. It is not a passive process however, we make choices every day to avail ourselves (or not) of opportunities to mature in our faith. A child's aging process happens regardless of their choices. You can't choose to stop aging at seven years old, right? Every year you have another birthday. It happens regardless of your choices. So talk about what those opportunities (our available choices) are to grow as a believer.

8. Consider this quote by theologian Tim Keller: "Love is the effort and desire to make someone else everything they were created to be." What does that statement mean to you? How does effort and desire go hand in hand?

Effort (action) is fueled by desire. What we want we tend to go after. What we love we want the best for. If we really love people like God loves, we will desire the best the for them and that desire, if it's genuine, will fuel our actions. Talk about the opposite of love to see how this is true:

The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. – Elie Wiesel.

MEMORIZE Hebrews 10:24 – "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds..."

CRB CORE VALUE THOUGHT – Our outward reach to the people around us includes the upcoming generation. This week in your prayer time, pray for the kids who attend CRB and their parents. Ask God to fill these young people with a hunger for things of God and to equip their parents with wisdom and insight.