



THE PODCAST

Discussion Guide

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Stage 3

The Narcissistic Years, Girls, Ages 11-14 **The Individual, Boys, Ages 9-12**

“This episode of life has been called the most frightening episode of life a girl will experience. We would say that it is also the most frightening a parent of a girl will experience, as well.”

“Boys will begin experimenting with breaking the rules in this stage. You want to function like the Department of Homeland Security. He needs us to be invested, involved, engaged and aware.”

It has been said, for many years, that girls mature faster than boys. This is the session when it becomes most obvious. Boys are still coming down from The Lover stage. They are seeking to understand themselves and engage in the world around them, but want and trust you to help guide them in the process. They are individuating, but want to individuate while still being connected to you, as their parents. Girls have taken their adventurousness and run with it—and are often, it feels like, running as far away as possible from you and from who they were just a few short years (or months...maybe days?) ago.

At A Glance

They sat on the couch opposite us. David and I each were in chairs, armed with all of the wisdom we hoped to offer this brother and sister who were once again at odds... and at very loud odds, we should say.

Their mom asked us to meet with them together. We had done so several times over the past few years, since their parents' divorce. We had gone over ways to help them get along better, code words they could use to take a break when one or the other was escalating, and activities they could do together to strengthen their relationships. But here we were in the midst of their fighting—all over again.

We do need to include the fact that Josh is in the Individual stage. He is funny, a little subversive with his sister, and wiggly at 11 years old. Jennifer is in all of her narcissistic glory at 13. She feels awkward in her own skin and that awkwardness comes out in the way she sits, the way she talks and at the way she regularly rolls her eyes at her brother.

As we talked through their last argument, Josh was quick to say, "Jennifer stops before I do. She knows how to walk away." (Still the sweetness of the lover stage bleeding through.)

"Yes, I do," said the all-knowing Jennifer.

As she added her mental points to the scoreboard, he spoke out to say, "but she won't wake up on time and makes me late for school. She spends hours in front of the mirror. And then I get mad. She thinks everyone's supposed to do what she wants."

"No I don't," Jennifer interrupted. "It takes girls longer to get ready. I don't expect someone who barely combs their hair to understand that."

We decide to hit the pause button before World War III ensued. It's easy to see how these two could get stuck, each defending their position.

Through Josh's words, you can hear him wanting to assert himself. He wants to be respected. He is growing in strength, but still has enough kindness to see his part in the conflict. He has stepped out of the Lover stage and into the Individual. There is evidence still of where he's been. We see lingering elements of the tender, obedient, relational little guy we knew, while witnessing evidence of a young man in search of his identity, and attempting to find his voice.

This next stage of his development involves him wrestling with his sense of himself. By nine to ten, a boy's brain is beginning to look deeply into what it means to be a man. He is curious about all things masculine in ways he simply couldn't be before. He is evolving and beginning to change. While girls continue ahead in the development race, and will begin experiencing changes in their bodies earlier and at a more advanced pace, he will trail behind with a slower, more gradual evolution.

He will experiment more with breaking the rules outside of home and needs us to be invested, involved and aware. This is the most common window for a boy to have his first exposure to internet pornography. He needs safeguards on the technology he has access to within our home and beyond. Equally so, he needs us to be strategic and diligent in our parenting, asking great questions when he spends time at other homes, and working to safeguard his heart and mind.

He needs us to flood him with information about his changing body, and the emotions that accompany those changes. As he edges toward adolescence, we want the Individual to feel armed and informed. We don't wait on the changes to take place and then give information. We want to stay a step ahead of his development. Puberty needs to be put in a physical, emotional and spiritual context.

Equally important is that he have experiences in relationship with us where we are simply enjoying him for him. We aren't just celebrating good grades (achievements) or game victories (performances), but simply celebrating the way God made him and participating in the things he loves to do. We want times with the Individual that are void of instruction, discipline, teaching or shaping. Those are all important ingredients, but he needs time with us that don't involve those elements.

Discussion Questions:

Are you having an ongoing conversation with him about his growing body, his developing emotions, and understanding relationships with the opposite sex?

What safeguards do you have in place within your home to safeguard his mind and heart? What are your family rules on media and technology?

What are two to three things your son enjoys within this season of his development? Set aside time to be about those things with him. Let him teach you something about one of these areas of enjoyment – play a video game with him, inquire about a book he is reading, have him show you a new skill or move he's learned in a sport he loves, listen to some music he's enjoying or teach you a new guitar lick.

What outlets exist for the individual to test his strength, stretch his mind, and provide opportunities for risk and adventure?

How are you as a family modeling outreach, service and giving? What opportunities exist for him to feel a sense of purpose?

Identify an area (academic, athletic, chores) where you can take a step back, creating more opportunity for him to develop responsibility or strengthen his resilience, and allowing you be less involved?

Jennifer doesn't quite know what to do with herself. She has one foot tentatively placed in childhood and is doing her best to stomp her other into adulthood. She doesn't know who she is and sure doesn't know who to be. The hours she spends in front of the mirror are just a reflection of the insecurity she feels in not only the way she looks on the outside, but also in who she is on the inside.

Girls, in these years, are emotionally all over the map. We often compare them to the Tasmanian Devil from the Warner Brothers cartoons. They have hormones surging through their brains and bodies. They have the hiccups in confidence that we talked about in the podcast. Her brain is growing at such an accelerated pace that it actually malfunctions. And when it does, it primarily affects two things: her memory and her confidence. The Tasmanian Devil. She comes into most rooms spinning and takes everything and everyone up in the swirling process. Girls in their Narcissistic Years have a lot working against them. And so what do they do with all of the chaos and confusion they're feeling? You already know the answer, if you have a daughter in these years. They often take it out on you, as their parents.

We have had countless—literally countless parents over the years say some version of the same comment, “I don't know what happened. Yesterday, she was all smiles and would crawl up on my lap to watch a show. Today, she doesn't want to be seen with me. She is angry at us and embarrassed by us constantly. It's like a switch flipped and she changed overnight.”

It is the most frightening episode of life you and she will experience. But she needs you to hang in there with her. She will push against you with all of the strength that she has in her little ambivalent self. But she is pushing against you because she wants to know that you won't move. She needs your consistency. With wisdom and unpredictability, she needs you to hold tight to boundaries but not get swept up in the drama that is often swirling around her. She needs your voice speaking into who she is, how she's changing emotionally, socially and spiritually. She needs you to help her navigate the pressure she feels in real time and on social media. She needs your kindness and your belief in her even when she is being the worst version of herself.

She needs you to enjoy her. And she needs you to continue to delight in her so that you and she can both remember that there is something delightful in her—even when it feels difficult to see.

Discussion Questions:

If your daughter has already moved into the narcissistic years, what was the transition like for you? For her?

Where do you see her insecurity?

What are some characteristics you see in her (even in her narcissism) that you could remind her of?

What does she enjoy?

How could you enjoy some of those things with her?

Where do you need to be more consistent?

Where and to whom are you able to talk when things get hard with your daughter?

The Parent Perspective

What music genre is your favorite? Over the years, mine has gradually moved from Top 40 to Easy Listening to now the dreaded “Oldies.” I like oldies, although I don’t particularly appreciate the word “oldies.”

Recently, I’ve started listening to XM Radio. XM is much more gracious to aging music...and aging people. Instead of an “Oldies” station, they name their stations by decades. The 40’s is simply called the 40’s...not uber-oldies or anything like that. The decades run all the way up to the 90’s. Soon, they’ll probably have a 00’s, for all of that generation that is already starting to make the oldies progression. My favorite happens to be the 60’s. I turn on the radio and immediately start tapping my toes. The music just makes me feel good.

A song comes on and I am transported. The other day, I heard the beginning strains of “dee doody doom doom” and was sitting, not in my car, but in my friend’s aunt’s car on the way to Florida. I was 12 all over again, with my three friends singing as loudly as we can, “Seven little girls sittin’ in the backseat huggin’ and a ‘kissin’ with Fred.” Not that we were kissing Fred, or even knew anything about Fred, or kissin’ for that matter, but we sang that song with all of the emotion our stage 4 little selves could muster.

I would guess music does the same for you. It takes you back. You may not be able to remember which President was in office or which history class you took in 6th grade, but you can remember every word to a particular song. You hear the opening notes and your mind is flooded with memories...where you were, who you were with, even what you had on.

Since being reminded of Fred and the girls in the backseat (which is, now that I think about it, a little concerning), I’ve been wondering why it is that our memories are so vividly tied to music—and particularly to music from early adolescence. The answer that makes the most sense to me is emotion.

Our early teenage years are undoubtedly one of the most emotional times of our lives. We’re beginning to be more self-aware. Girls are more self-absorbed and narcissistic. Boys are becoming aware of the world around them and their impact on it. In these years, we felt every bit of the heights of joy and the depths of extreme sorrow. You can see it in your children today. A mom of twelve year old twins brought them in for their first counseling session and said, “Well, their names are Allison and Catherine, but we call them Trauma and Drama.”

And they are. Boys and girls are dramatic and experiencing trauma, each in their own way. We were, too. And it takes only a few bars of our favorite songs of those times to take us back.

But we can also be taken back in other ways. Your daughter is getting ready to try out for cheerleading. You seem to be more invested in her getting her round-off

back-handspring than she is. Maybe it's because you still remember the pain you felt when you tried out and didn't make it.

As a kid, you never felt your dad's approval. No matter how poorly or well you played in a basketball game, your dad had something negative to say. And, now, you have a son with a lot of talent. You push him—sometimes too hard, but it's just because you don't want others to criticize him the way you were criticized. A memory, a flash, a failure, and you're taken right back.

We remember the joy and the pain of our early teenage years...maybe especially the pain. Pain is like that. When you feel it, all of your attention is immediately drawn there—even if it's just a stubbed toe. It's hard to think about anything else. Emotional pain can do the same thing to us. When, as an eleven year-old, you were left out of every birthday party and sleepover, it's hard to not become an adult who is hyper-sensitive to rejection. It's that whole idea again that we are every age we've ever been. And this age probably stirs up more of our pain than any other.

As a parent, these are the years that can really challenge your perspective the most. Because your past can color that perspective. It can make you push...or protect your child more than you would have because of your experiences when you were his or her age.

What memories are being stirred up in you in these years? What songs take you back and what do they take you back to? How do you move on from a past that was so painful that it feels like yesterday, rather than fifteen, twenty, or even thirty years ago?

One of the primary differences in you and your child is your ability to act. They are often, in these years, simply reacting. They're often not really in control—of their emotions or their decisions. Someone hurts them and they hit or hurt back. You ground them and they roll their eyes. They are impulsive and reactionary as a part of their makeup as teenagers.

But you don't have to be. You are an adult now, even though you may still be living with pain from those years. But you are no longer bound by that impulsivity. You don't have to react out of the pain of your past. You can choose to act. You can choose to parent them differently than you were parented. You can treat them differently than you were treated. And we have a few suggestions that might help:

1. Pay attention to the memories that are stirred in you.
2. Identify and talk about the feelings with someone you trust.
3. Pray that God will help you see yourself as you are now...as a parent armed with God's wisdom and truth—who is free to love and act, rather than simply react.

Try It Out—For Parents of Girls

“To the degree that kids can predict you, they’ll dismiss you.”

These words are the first sentence in Melissa and my book, *The Back Door to Your Teen’s Heart*. They’re also the first words that describe the conversations in countless cars across the country every afternoon.

You pick your twelve year-old daughter up from school. “How was your day,” you congenially ask.

“Fine,” she grunts.

“What did you do in school today?”

“Nothing,” another grunt.

And there you have it. You’re not only dismissed but left with silence for the entire car ride home.

With teenagers, that’s what happens when you come through the front door. (These same ideas will hold true for boys in the next stage of their development.) Figuratively and sometimes literally, you get the door slammed in your face. More examples of the front door involve statements such as, “Let’s spend some quality time together.” “We haven’t talked in a while. Tell me what’s going on in your life.” You get the picture.

So let’s think about coming in through the back door. We gave one example in the podcast involving coffee. Teenage girls think coffee is cool. Another example, for girls, could have to do with anything else they love...clothes, cell phones, social media, cell phones, friends, cell phones.

Choose something she loves and feels like she knows a lot about. Tell her how much you value her opinion (even if it’s mostly just in this area). You can have her help you go through your closet and get rid of old clothes, if she loves fashion. She could teach you how to use a certain feature on your cell phone. She could help you set up or update your social media account.

If you ask her to help you, she will feel a little power and a little respect, two things she’s craving in this stage of life. And she will also feel important...something she doesn’t feel very often in these years. (We promise she doesn’t, even though she acts as if the world revolves around her.) Then, as you’re going through the closet, you can ask her about the party she went to the night before. =Or, sitting at the computer together, you can ask her how it’s going with a friend she was having trouble with. And, all of a sudden, she finds herself talking to you because she doesn’t think she’s supposed to. That’s the back door.

What does it look like for you to connect to your daughter in a way that is both unpredictable and relational? For me, Sissy, the back door doesn’t come naturally.

I'm much more of a front door, Type A kind of person—which is why Melissa came up with this back door concept, rather than me. For me to connect with girls in this way requires a strong foundation of prayer and good dose of creativity. And time. It takes forethought on my part. It might on yours, too. And, by the way, unpredictability doesn't equal inconsistency in your parenting style. You can still be direct and concrete in her discipline. She needs you to be. She needs predictability in her consequences and your strength as a parent. But you invite a different kind of both conversation and relationship when you wander unpredictably through the back door.

Try it Out—For Parents of Boys

I (David) have vivid memories of my son's playing years of basketball. The season ended with a tournament - a local version of March Madness. It was always a double elimination tournament and one year our team had made it to day three with only one loss. We'd either be eliminated or crowned the champions. Needless to say, adrenaline and testosterone permeated my home. My wife could hardly wait for this event (she agrees with the "Madness" part of the title) to come to a close.

We stepped into the gymnasium on day three and the place smelled of basketballs, bleachers, sweat and all things boy. The room was full of young athletes, racing up and down the court, fighting for a victory. The bleachers were filled with parents, grandparents, siblings, friends and fans who'd devoted their weekend to the young men on the court. Some of the adults came to cheer, some of them came to celebrate, some came to support, and most came with cameras. Everyone seemed hopeful for a victory for their team - a chance to advance on to the next bracket.

Any time I'm trapped inside an athletic arena with boys and adults, there's always much to observe. Quite honestly, I think most of us expose ourselves in this context. We show up for who we really are. The best and the worst of who we are seems to seep out in athletic arenas involving kids. Men, in particular, tend to expose themselves in this context.

We arrived early to meet up with our team and I had a chance to watch while my boys talked strategy with their coaches and teammates. The teams playing before us were of the same age, but more advanced in their skill and ability. Their parents appeared to be more advanced in their skill and ability as well. I say this because despite each team being equipped with coaches, this group of parents (as is often the case) felt a need to coach from the sidelines. They were yelling commands, ideas, strategies, and recommendations from the sidelines. While the coaches were calling out plays from one side of the court, the parents were doing the same from the other side. One young man looked distressed as his coach yelled to him from the east side while his dad leaped off the bleachers and combed the boundary yelling at him from the west side. His dad was pounding his fist in the air while the veins on the side of his neck pulsated and flexed.

When the referee called a foul on one of his teammates, this dad started stomping and screaming at the referee (who I'm guessing to be 15 years old). The coach began harmonizing as this young referee got a taste of what this boy had been experiencing - two adult males yelling at him from either side. I couldn't understand what the father was yelling, but it didn't sound favorable by the color of his neck and face.

Sadly we could duplicate this scene in a thousand cities across the U.S. It might involve a basketball, a soccer ball, a football, or a baseball. Wherever boys are playing a sport and parents are watching, this scene could unfold.

I once counseled a young man who experienced his own version of the scene I just described. He was dribbling near the sidelines, trying to remember the play, identify

which teammate was open, dribble the ball despite a full court press, all while his coach yelled from one side and his dad from another. The intensity became too great and this 3rd grader stopped dribbling, held the ball and screamed, “will everyone please stop yelling at me? I’m trying to think!!!”

This boy put words to what I believe thousands of boys would like to scream out from the court or field at sporting events. It really doesn’t take much to overload or flood the male brain. Moms do it every day when they call out multi-step instructions as a boy crosses the threshold of his home after school.

“Leave your muddy shoes on the front porch.”

“Jump on your homework because we’ve got dinner in an hour and you have a math test tomorrow.”

“Grab a quick shower because we’re going to call your aunt tonight – it’s her birthday.”

“Let the dog out before you get your books out. He hasn’t been out in hours.”

Hearing this sequence of requests often leaves a boy meandering about the house, trying to remember the first one. Dads often flood a boy’s brain with instruction around his performance, much like the above mentioned examples. Three rules to keep in mind.

1. If we turn our sons over to capable coaches and educators, it’s our job to become cheerleaders. He needs enjoyment and support, not to be flooded with instruction. He has a coach/teacher, your job is to be a parent.
2. We can’t pay enough attention to ourselves when boys compete. Athletic experiences are designed to teach boys skills, encourage sportsmanship, keep boys active, and to provide a context for problem-solving, experiencing victory and defeat, being a part of a team, and most importantly to have fun. It’s about him and not about us.
3. One of our objectives is to teach boys to disagree with others with respect. When we rail against referees and coaches from the sidelines, or a teacher in the hallway, we’re modeling something different than we are asking of boys.

A courageous parent is willing to ask a boy questions like “how am I doing as a spectator when I come to your games? What could I do more or less of when I’m sitting on the sidelines? How could I support you more?”

Ask questions of this nature regarding his academic journey. “How can I best support you as a student? Where would you like me to be less involved? Where would you like me to be more involved?”

We will straddle the fence of involvement/independence over the next two stages of his development. He will desperately need us to provide opportunities for independence as we stay involved and invested with the Individual.

Sheep Among Wolves

“Stay alert. This is hazardous work I’m assigning you. You’re going to be like sheep running through a wolf pack, so don’t call attention to yourselves. Be as cunning as a snake, inoffensive as a dove.”
-Matthew 10:16, *The Message*

Matthew 10:16 is the verse with which we start off our book, *The Back Door to Your Teen’s Heart*. It explains the concept—in very different terms. Rather than Jesus sending out the disciples, it is our version of sending you out...right back into your homes. One of you is the sheep and one of you is the wolf. Guess which is which?

You guessed it. You are the sheep running through a wolf pack. Tweens, pre-teens and teens all have several things in common with wolf packs. They stick together. They often don’t think for themselves but follow each other into whatever the alpha/mean girl/cool guy says. They can be snarly and snippy whenever they want.

As for you, we do know you’re much smarter than a sheep. But we’re also sure you have some sheep-y moments as a parent. “Why is he being so rude to me?” “She never appreciates me.” You don’t understand why, but the wolves just keep snarling and circling.

So what’s a sheep—or parent to do?

1. Don’t call attention to yourselves. To come through the front door is to call attention to yourself. “We need to spend some quality time together.” Nope. Doesn’t go over so well. Think again about that back door concept.
2. Be as cunning as a snake, inoffensive as a dove.

I (Melissa) had a pretty amazing grandmother. She lived to be over 103 years old. She also was a dyed-in-the-wool Baptist. At 100, she told me that she had just learned something new from her cleaning lady. She learned that other people were going to Heaven if they believed in Jesus, not just the Baptists. She taught me lots of truths over the years—

One truth she taught me without ever saying much. It was at her 100th birthday party. All of her family and friends were gathered around and she was laying on the couch by the fire. I heard my name clearly over the noise of the crowd, “LIS.” And when my grandmother called, I came. I walked over to her. She grabbed my hand and squeezed tight. “I pray for you every day.” Then, with her other hand, she stretched her crooked finger right up into my face and said, “Now you be good.” By the way, I was well into my 40’s at the time.

We have a whole section of our book called “Holding their Hands and Pointing your Finger.” That idea goes with the verse in Matthew. As a parent of a child in these years, it is important to hold their hands. You want to be inoffensive, dove-like, tender, connected, relational—as much as they’ll let you.

But then, they need you to be cunning. They need you to hold up your crooked finger and be the parent. Give them consequences. "I will not let you talk to your mother that way because I believe that you are a much kinder, respectful young man than you're acting right now." "You will make up your little brother's bed for a week, since you seem to want to be his mother already." Parent in ways that are as cunning as a snake. Be unpredictable. But be relational at the same time.

Hold his hand. Point your finger. Be as wise as a serpent and gentle as a dove. Love her through the back door and all the way through the chaos of these tween/pre-teen/teenage years.

Unity

Many years ago, I (David) took my sons to a camp in North Carolina hosting a Father/Son weekend. It's a camp for boys in the beautiful mountains of Tuxedo, North Carolina. As you step onto the campus of this refuge for boys, there is a sign hanging over the main hall that reads "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity." The words are from Psalm 133:1. I love those words and I want to consider all of what is meant in the truth of those words.

My wife took an art class years ago and took that scripture and created this beautiful piece of art that hangs in my son's room. The art was created with paint, old vintage pieces from our family's history and those rich words.

In case you are wondering, my boys don't always live in unity with one another. In fact, some days there is little evidence of unity in their relationship. Boys (males of all ages) struggle with collaborating when they are instinctively wired to compete. Regardless, we continue to pray those words over their room, over our home and over the people who share life within that space. We are hoping to live with an awareness of what it means to model unity for our children.

For my wife and for me, unity means that we have a common spirit. We want the same things. Because of the differences that exist in us because of our gender, our temperaments, and our styles, the execution of parenting looks different. Some days not all that different, some days very different. But what we hope our children experience is that we share the same values, core beliefs and desires for our marriage and our family.

We are hoping to model what it means to disagree with respect, to respond with kindness, compassion, humility, self-control, patience and gentleness. Unity for us means that we can come at something with a completely different perspective, and somehow manage to honor, celebrate and support the other person. It means we can disagree and come back together if we need to apologize, take ownership for our part and do whatever is needed to repair the relationship.

Anne Lamott once said "you can practice being right or you can practice being kind."¹ In the end, I'd rather be known as someone who gave his best shot at being kind rather than someone who always had to be right.

Define unity with your kids at some point this week. Consider writing a mission statement for your family, identifying the core beliefs of your family, the principles you prioritize and what defines you as people who share life together.

The Power of Like

“Three things amaze me, no, four things I’ll never understand—how an eagle flies so high in the sky, how a snake glides over a rock, how a ship navigates the ocean, why adolescents act the way they do.”
-Proverbs 30:18, *The Message*

“What was he thinking?”

“I can’t imagine what’s gotten into her head!”

“Why in the world...?”

Have you found yourself asking any of these questions in the last few days/months/years—basically since your child has been moving toward teenagedom? We would guess the answer would be a resounding “YES!”

The writer of Proverbs wondered the same thing. The title of the section in *The Message* is called “Four Mysteries.” And boy, are they a mystery! Often, as David says, when you’re wondering what they’re thinking, the answer is that they’re not.

We’ve already outlined that girls and boys in this stage are searching, evolving, experimenting, insecure, and ambivalent. They’re relational, but not particularly with you, as their parent. And then we tell you to enjoy them.

Now you may be asking “What in the world are we thinking?”

The answer is that we actually are. Girls in this stage and boys, beginning now and moving into the next stage, will have some of their very least enjoyable moments. It will be profoundly difficult to connect to them. He gives one-word answers. You walk up the stairs to talk and, just as you reach the top stair, she shuts her door. You can’t go see movies together because he doesn’t want to be seen in the same 50-foot radius as you. You can’t watch television with her because you’re just not particularly interested in binge-watching any show that outlines life as a teenager today. You’ve got enough of that life living under your roof.

And we still say enjoy them.

It doesn’t mean you have to understand them. Donald Miller, in *Blue Like Jazz*, says “No one will listen to you unless they sense that you like them.”² So, enjoying them really accomplishes two purposes with teenagers.

1. It fosters a relationship that is often tenuous.
2. It makes them a little more willing to listen.

And, as the old saying goes, “If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.” You may find nothing in these years that you would naturally enjoy together. The music they pick. The movies they watch. The video games they play. None are really what you would choose in your free time. It doesn’t matter. They need you to enter their world, because they are narcissistic enough not to dream of entering yours.

What does your son love?

What does your daughter do when she has free time?

If she loves a certain band, have her play you some of her favorite songs and tell you what she loves about them or the lyrics. If your son loves a certain video game, play it with him and find out what draws him to it. If you learn about anything they love, in these years, you learn about them. You may not learn to understand them, but you can maybe communicate a little of how much you like—and love them in the process.

Fear and Courage

“God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”
-1 Timothy 1:7

Melissa Trevathan, among her many gifts, has the gift of creativity. She has this remarkable ability to make the truths of scripture so real and digestable for people of all ages. For as long as I've (David) known her, I've watched her wander in front of a group of kids, teenagers or adults, carrying some random object – a rock, a suitcase, a rotted piece of fruit, a glass of water, a plate of pancakes – and wonder where will she be taking us in making the scriptures real today.

She's a great storyteller as well. She'll begin with some story about stealing candy bars, getting a tooth knocked out, or sitting in a tree with her baby dolls and help us find our way to some great truth.

After spending a first summer at our Daystar camps, my own daughter came home with some rich truth wrapped around her mind. My daughter was moving schools that fall, weeks after her experience at camp. We talked often about how she was feeling about her first day at an unfamiliar place. Our conversations about this new chapter changed after camp. She'd say things like “Miss Melissa said courage isn't the absence of fear, but the presence of fear. Being afraid isn't so bad if it means I have a chance to be courageous.”

She begin to think differently about starting a brand new school, speaking in front of a group of people, trying something new for the first time. She still feels nervous, timid, afraid, and sometimes even terrified in the face of those opportunities. But she understands fear presents the opportunity for courage. And that God hasn't given her a spirit of fear or of timidity, but one of courage. She is growing in an understanding that those feelings don't define her, they are just that . . . feelings.

And she can offer those feelings, and all the ideas that accompany them to a God who cares about the way she feels and the intimate details of her life.

She was invited to take it a step farther. The last part of that verse is something Melissa speaks to on many occasions. It's part of what she wove into the fabric of Daystar – that we have a spirit of power and love. Melissa rooted Daystar in the belief that one life touches another, and that nothing has taken place in our lives that is so painful that we can't give.

Melissa challenges parents often to parent out of love and not out of fear. That takes a great amount of courage. We are calling kids and families to love every day in the work that happens in that little yellow house we call Daystar. We are calling kids and families to courage, to love and to give. We've all been given a spirit of power and love.

Take advantage to have a dinner conversation around courage. Ask every family member to identify a time they felt courageous in the face of fear.

Consider having everyone identify a particular struggle or challenge they have faced and how it gave way to some opportunity to give to someone else.

Coming Alongside

“All praise to the God and Father of our Master, Jesus the Messiah! Father of all mercy! God of all healing counsel! He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us.”

-2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Pick one popular song from your individual or narcissistic years. What is the first song you learned to dance to? That you remember listening to with a group of friends singing? Playing on the radio when your dad took you fishing? Find that song. Either listen to it or sing as much of it as you can remember out loud. (We apologize to your kids if they are sitting nearby). What memories are associated with it? What were you doing? Who were you with?

As you think back, allow yourself to remember some of the other happy memories you have of that time. Who were they with? What sounds and pictures—even smells go along with them?

What are some of the more painful memories? Do you remember feeling left out? Betrayed? Hurt? Insignificant? Maybe even invisible? As you think back on those times and all of the emotion that was inside of you, where was God in it? How did he come alongside you in those years, in that pain? Who did he use, how did he comfort you, how did he speak truth into your heart? How has that truth impacted who you are today?

Today, you know the Father of all mercy. If you don't, it's as simple as talking to him. He longs to bring healing to the places that still hurt. He has been coming alongside you since the day you were born and will continue to in His great mercy. He loves you and longs to be the God of all comfort to you. Then you, in turn, can come alongside your son who feels like a failure. You can walk with your daughter who wants so desperately to feel that she matters.

He comes alongside you so that you can come alongside them...even if it's in a back door way. He is the God of all mercy, all comfort, and He is a God of hope. Always. Whether we're thirteen or thirty...or a thirty year-old who still, on some days, feels thirteen.

An Opportunity to Grow

“Growth is the delight of the child and the agony of youth, but it is not natural to the middle aged.”
-Eugene Peterson³

This growing up process is not natural...at least it's not for you. Children, tweens and even teenagers are always looking toward something.

“I can't wait to be double digits.”

“Well when I turn 13...or 16, 17, 18.”

We, on the other hand, are not looking toward so much anymore. We may be looking back. We're hopefully looking here...at what's right in front of us. But we don't have quite the excitement about growing older that our children do. And you may not really even be looking forward to their growing up. At best, it's bittersweet. You wouldn't want them to have to live in this pre-adolescent awkwardness forever. But you were really hoping this stage would hold off for as long as possible.

In the beginning of this section, we talked about this being the most frightening episode of life for a girl and her parents. For boys, the frightening part is just starting to raise its head—and your heartrate in these years.

Growing? They're growing in front of our eyes, but this time seems much more about their growth than yours. When we talked about what we wanted to name the seminar that goes along with the material from this study, Grow is one of the names we talked about the most. Raising boys and girls is about their growth—and yours. And in these years, particularly, you have a tremendous opportunity for growth.

Eugene Peterson goes on to call adolescence a gift in the life of a parent. It may not feel that way right now. The idea of adolescence may be met with much more trepidation than excitement for you. But we promise there can be good gifts along the way. God can use this time, while He is growing your son or daughter, as an opportunity to grow you, as well.

What does or could that growth look like in your life today?

Father, we pray that you would be near to the parents who are reading and working through this curriculum today. Bless their children with the knowledge of your grace and boundless love for each of them. And open their dad's and mom's eyes to how you specifically, lovingly want to be growing them, too—as parents and as people. Amen.

Write about what comes to mind as you pray and listen.

Sabbath

“Oh! May the God of green hope fill you up with joy, fill you up with peace, so that your believing lives, filled with the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit, will brim over with hope!”
-Romans 15:13

We want you to take this day as a Sabbath, every week. There will be 6 devotionals, and then a day to take a Sabbath. Sabbath literally means to rest from labor. Our prayer, today, is that you will find rest and refreshment through Christ. You are in the place He has chosen you to be. God is a god of hope, joy and peace. May He grant you that today and this week in your journey to Raising Boys and Girls.

Books & Movies

Books:

1. *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio
2. *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank
3. *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan
4. *I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World* by Malala Yousafzai & Patrician McCormick
5. *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George
6. *Where the Red Fern Grows* by Wilson Rawls
7. *Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis
8. *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak
9. *The Giver* by Lois Lowry
10. *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen

Movies:

1. *Unbroken*
2. *The Pursuit of Happiness*
3. *Rudy*
4. *Selma*
5. *Simon Birch*
6. *We are Marshall*
7. *Pride & Prejudice*
8. *Sense & Sensibility*
9. *Little Women*

10. *Cheaper by the Dozen*
11. *A River Runs Through It*
12. *Napoleon Dynamite*
13. *Wonder Woman*
14. *Man of Steel*
15. *Captain America: The First Avenger*
16. *When the Game Stands Tall*
17. *We Bought a Zoo*
18. *Bend it Like Beckham*
19. *Little Boy*
20. *Pay it Forward*
21. *Cinderella Man*
22. *42: The Jackie Robinson Story*
23. *Belle*
24. *The Young Victoria*
25. *The Ultimate Gift*
26. *Woodlawn*
27. *Race*
28. *Apollo 13*
29. *The Book Thief*
30. *My All American*

Notes

Stage 3

¹Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 220.

²Anne Lamott, *Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith*, (New York: Riverhead Books, 2005), 94.

³Eugene Peterson, *Like Dew Your Youth*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976, 1994), 7.