



THE PODCAST

Discussion Guide

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raisingboysandgirls.co

Stage 1

The Explorer, Boys, Ages Birth-4 The Discovery Years, Girls, Ages Birth-5

“Relationships provide the backdrop for your daughter’s growing identity at every stage of her life.”

“Boys come out of the womb hard-wired for activity.” He begins and continues as an active, adventurous, curious, imaginative being who is an experiential learner.

Girls and boys are different. They learn differently. They relate differently. And they develop differently. It’s all part of God’s design and his plan to make your son and daughter into who He has uniquely called them to be. We’ll begin to explore the differences...who they are and what they need in these early, important years of your child’s life.

At A Glance

She walked into my (Sissy's) office wearing jeans, an old t-shirt and converse tennis shoes that were green on one side and red and white-striped on the other. Her mom brought her to counseling because she wasn't being invited to any sleepovers or birthday parties. Her mom was worried. Izzy, on the other hand, was perplexed. She just couldn't understand why the other kids didn't like her. The more we talked about it, the more she realized that it was because she was different.

A few months later, Izzy had reconciled herself to being different...and was glad. "I've found a few friends who are different, too. And we can be ourselves together." That May, her class was given an assignment to needlepoint something for their moms for Mother's Day. Most of her classmates needlepointed statements like "I Love Mom," or "Best Mom in the World." Izzy's needlepoint simply said, "Difference is Beauty."

Now if a 4th grade boy had to needlepoint a gift for his mother (and can you just imagine the damage a 4th grade boy could do with knitting or needlepoint needles?), his would more likely say "Difference is Cool." And it is. Both things. Out of his infinite wisdom, God designed men and women, boys and girls to be different down to our very tiniest chromosomes.

Boys are wild and wooly, active and adventurous. Girls are engaging, intuitive and imaginative. In the words of the famous children's poem,

*What are little boys made of
Snips and snails and puppy dogs' tails
That's what little boys are made of.

What are little girls made of
Sugar and spice and all things nice
That's what little girls are made of.*

Snips and Snails

Before my (David) daughter was born, someone gave us one of those safety kits to child proof the house – outlet plugs, cabinet fasteners, etc. We mistakenly lost the kit in a move we made months before my daughter's birth. Years later, I accidentally found the kit while cleaning out our basement and storing some of her delicate, pink baby clothes, in preparation for her twin brothers. I kicked myself for being an irresponsible parent and never remembering to plug up the outlets and safeguard the cleaning supplies from consumption. The truth of the matter is that my daughter never really required that kind of safety plan. I'm not saying that girls don't do their fair share of exploring. They certainly do, but my daughter tended to find objects on the floor, hold them up to us and hand them over for safe-keeping. It never occurred to her to stick them up her nose, in her ear, or flush them down the toilet.

Her brothers, on the other hand, imagined every one of those scenarios (and then some). There was no safety kit that could have prevented the kind of damage my explorers would bring upon our house – blinds pulled off the windows, toilet lids shimmied off the seat, scaling furniture. I often say that boys are like puppies. If they are out of your sight and things get quiet, you should be greatly concerned.

Early on, he is a tactile, kinesthetic learner. He explores his world as much with his hands as with his eyes. Parenting an explorer involves creating a safe environment for him to move, explore, experience healthy risk and adventure, and to match his growing curiosity. Parenting an explorer involves paying attention to all the threads of his development – physical, emotional, relational, spiritual and cognitive. It requires us to pay attention to his unique wiring and to build our expectations, boundaries, responses, discipline and nurture around his design. We are guilty of parenting in opposition to his design. He needs us to study him and know him.

Sugar and Spice

Girls are relational. You will hear that sentence throughout the podcast and this guide. They are relational in who they are and what they need from us. From her earliest moments, the wiring in your daughter's brain dictates her need to connect. She will connect in the way she looks at you, laughs with you and smiles. Once she can walk and talk, she will want you to come with her as she discovers the world around her. She will reach out of her little relational being to want to care for you, for friends, even for bugs that are hurt. And she will invite you to imagine with her as you play house, school and have tea parties. I recently spoke to a father who was concerned with his daughter's concern for her stuffed animals. When they picked her up from preschool to leave for a surprise trip to Disney World, she burst into tears. "I can't leave Fluffy and all of my other animals! How would you feel if I went on a trip and left you?"

Because of the importance of their relationship with you, your daughter will need much from you in these first five years. But probably the three most important things she can gain from you are boundaries, a sense of bravery and delight. She needs to have the freedom to explore the world...to wander away within the safety of your care. In that wandering, she needs to hear from you that she's brave. She needs you to point out her courage when you see it...to remind her that she is capable and strong. She'll need those reminders starting here, but often over the course of her growing up. She also needs to be told no, and then she needs to be told yes. As she wanders, she will develop the beginnings of self-confidence. As you stop her from wandering...or disobeying, or hitting her brother, she will develop even more confidence in you and your security. And, finally, you have the tremendous opportunity to delight in her in these years. She longs for you to notice and admire her...to think she's wonderful. She wants you to see her as beautiful and smart and funny and all things nice, as well as all things brave.

How do you see your daughter discovering? Your son as an explorer? How can you draw those characteristics out in them even more? These are just a few questions to

get you started in the process of loving these sugar and spice, snips and snails children through the first stage of their lives.

Discussion Questions:

How can you tell that your daughter is wired for relationship? When does your son seem most himself?

How does she invite you to connect with her? How does he invite you to connect with him?

How do you respond?

How do you see her expressing emotion most often? What about him? How could you help her learn to express emotion more, or more appropriately? How could you express your emotions differently in front of her (or him)?

How do you see your daughter/son's imagination at work? Where could you step in and play more imaginatively with them or linger in play?

What kind of boundaries do you have for your daughter/son? Do you need to set stronger boundaries or relax them a little?

Do you let your daughter/son take safe risks? How could you do so more? What are some areas she has opportunity to have courage and he has the opportunity to feel risk?

How could you remind her of her bravery? What about his strength?

*Do you take the time to delight in your daughter? Do you take time to enjoy your son?
What makes it difficult? How could you do more of it?*

What are you learning from being a student of your child that you didn't know months ago?

The Parent Perspective

I (Melissa) have an Explorer puppy. Actually we all do. In the last year and a half, all three of us have lost our old, sweet, calm, predictable dogs...and gotten puppies.

My puppy, Blueberry the Old English Sheepdog, doesn't look like a puppy anymore. She's a hopping 70 pounds—not whopping, but hopping because she hops on all fours. As a matter of fact, Blueberry's hopping wears me out to the point that she has an "aunt" (don't tell Blueberry that she's really a dog trainer) that she goes and has sleepovers with—often.

David's puppy, a yellow lab, is currently ten weeks old. Just last week, David said he was going to sit Owen on his sidewalk with a sign around his neck that says "Free Puppy". I think that was after Owen went to the bathroom in the office for the third time in one day and catapulted himself onto yet another parent that David was trying to counsel.

Sissy's puppy, Lucy, is a Havanese. She's only seven pounds and waves. Literally. She waves at the kids Sissy counsels. She waves at David. She waves at me. And the instant you stop petting, she starts waving again. With her little bitty paws, she is saying, "Attention makes me happy!"

If you haven't had a puppy in a while, you may not remember. You likely have the same kinds of responses we used to, "Oh, he's so cute. I miss having a puppy. They are so fun to have around." Ha!

Now, we really love our puppies. Don't get us wrong. But, if you've hung around the three of us any time recently, you've heard very different responses from those listed above. "He's wearing me out! Will she ever go to the bathroom outside? How do I make her stop hopping? What is with all of this energy? I'M SO TIRED!"

What happens for me, when I get tired with Blueberry is that I give in. We go for a walk and I get tired of "No, Blueberry. Stop. Sit. Come. Stay. No." So she ends up pulling me.

It's hard to have boundaries, give them freedom, be consistent and still have the energy to hold up your head to say goodnight. Oops! We're talking about dogs, not children. Actually, we would guess you feel pretty similar. When I hear David and Sissy talk about all of the things kids are and need in these years, I get tired.

Children in their explorer and discovery years are active, aggressive, curious, relational, caretaking and emotional. They need boundaries, open space, consistency, bravery and delight. You know they need these things, and you even know they will really help. But why is it so hard?

I would say it's hard for a lot of reasons, but there are two that I think are especially difficult in these years. First is the simple fact that you are tired. I met with a parent recently who said, "I know all of the things I'm supposed to be doing. But I work 10-hour days, 4 days a week. I just can't come home and sit and play with my son."

You may not work the same schedule. But you work hard. You work hard to love your child and meet the needs of him/her and the rest of your family. And there are just so many needs in these years. Laundry and boundaries and meals and delight and providing for your family and open space and errands and bravery. And then your child wants to stay up “just a few more minutes.” It’s exhausting.

There is also the happiness factor. If there is one sentence I hear most often from parents in my office, it’s “I just want my child to be happy.” He wants to stay up a little longer at bedtime. She wants a candy bar at the grocery. He wants a toy. She wants you to pick her up. And you want your child to feel loved. So, you say, “Okay, just one more,” or “This is the last time.”

Let’s go back to the bedtime scenario. It’s been a long day. You tell your son it’s time to go to bed. “Just one more minute, Mommy.” You give a few more minutes, to make him happy. You try again—five minutes later. “No!” His response this time is a little more aggressive than pleading. Five more minutes. “Okay, it really is time.” And then the tears come. He falls apart. And you’re caught between wanting him to be happy and being so exhausted yourself that it’s easier just to let him fall asleep on the couch and carry him upstairs.

We know. We’ve carried our puppies upstairs a few times ourselves. (Okay, maybe not in that scenario, but we do feel your pain—and exhaustion).

One of the things that sometimes happens when we become a parent is that we cease to be a person. You don’t get the rest you need. You don’t go to dinner with friends or take trips with your spouse. A mom told me a few years ago that she and her husband hadn’t taken a trip together in eight years, which was exactly how old their daughter was at the time. Your children need a lot of things, but they don’t need to be the center of your universe. That is actually too much attention, which we’ll talk about later. They need you to have a life outside of them so you can return to life with them a little more refreshed.

In an interview I once heard, Eugene Peterson said that “One of the most important things we can do as a parent is to be a person.” You are a person. You are a person who has a son. Or a daughter. Or both. But your son or daughter needs you to get together with friends from time to time. Send your child to their aunt’s for a sleepover, like Blueberry. Gain some perspective. Know that you are going to be tired. To fail. And that it’s okay to give in sometimes. But God gives rest to the weary (Jeremiah 31:25 and Matthew 11:28) and you are not being a bad parent to take that rest. It’s why we have the idea of Sabbath built in to this guide. You are a parent and a person. Give yourself room and grace to be both.

Try It Out—For Parents of Girls

When we speak at different parenting seminars across the country, we like to ask parents if they think boys or girls are harder to raise? What would your answer be? The general consensus we hear is that boys are harder when they're younger and girls are harder once adolescence starts creeping—or flying into view.

You can probably guess the reasons. Boys, as David talks more about in his section, have a little more energy (and maybe mischief) in their younger ages. It's those snips and snails and puppy dog's tails. Girls, on the other hand are made of sugar and spice and everything nice—until adolescence, that is. Maybe that's when the spice takes a little more effect.

We don't want to scare you parents with girls in these discovery years who haven't yet felt the stirrings of teenagedom in your daughters' lives. We'll come to all of that later. But what we do want to do is prepare you. We want to use this section to start a conversation between you and your daughter that will continue throughout this study and hopefully throughout her life.

So, here's where we want you to start. One of the best things, as a parent, we believe you can do is become a student of your child. Get to know her. Obviously, you know more about her than probably anyone else on the planet. But do you really know her? Do you know what she's thinking about when she's quiet at the dinner table? Do you know what she worries about when she can't fall asleep? What brings her the most joy or the most sorrow in her life today? The older she gets, the less likely she volunteers this information. But it doesn't mean she doesn't want you to know. It just means you have to use a little more creativity to find out.

So here are a few questions you could start by asking her. We'll talk more in these sections about the context of your conversations at different ages. But, suffice it to say for now that sometimes these conversations flow easier in a relational context... whatever her age. So, for now, go for a walk with her. Play her favorite board game. Stay a little longer on the edge of her bed after you say prayers. If she's older, sit up for her to come in from the movie with friends. And then ask her a few of the following:

How is it different being a girl today than you think it was when I was growing up?

What are your favorite parts of being a girl?

What do you think the hardest parts are?

Do you think boys have it easier or girls? Why?

What do you think most girls worry about? What do you worry about?

Obviously, if your daughter isn't speaking yet, or speaking in coherent sentences, she can't answer these questions. But, as young as she can formulate thoughts, you can start the communication going.

As a side note, if she's an adolescent, you might flip ahead and try what we call "The Back Door." You may have to be a little more unpredictable in your question asking with her. But, regardless of her age and her response, we assure you she will be glad you asked.

Try it Out—For Parents of Boys

It's equally important to become a student of your son. As a parent of twin boys, I am fascinated by the reality that I have these two creatures in my care who have the same genetic ingredients, share gender, were born within minutes of one another, have been raised in the same household, and yet the outcome couldn't look any more different. They are a daily reminder to me of the unique artistry of our God. He has created each of our kids with their own unique blueprint. And it's our job to study that blueprint throughout the course of their lives. Just when you think you have an idea about who he is, he will jump into the next stage of development, and evolve and change as a person. The young man you knew at five years of age will become a different boy at the age of ten. That's not to say that you won't begin to see trends within his temperament as he grows and matures. You will certainly begin to see evidence of his core temperament from the earliest moments of his life. And take note. Our job is to study his temperament and to "train him in the way he should go," as the scripture so wisely instructs us.

Getting access to his mind and heart is one of the greater challenges in the journey of parenting boys. Within this section of the guide, I'll suggest some questions for you to ask him throughout his development (hang on for some of those in the next chapter). You will need to be strategic in when you ask and how you go about asking. Boys almost have to be tricked into conversation at times. They don't come out of the womb hard-wired with a strong emotional vocabulary. We have to do a good amount of digging and searching. Getting access to a boy's mind and heart is a bit like an archeological dig. There is much evidence to support what we've long known to be true, that he typically isn't as verbal as she is. He has a more challenging journey of shaping, forming and using words. There are a number of obstacles to articulating the things he feels.

Your primary objective in this stage is studying him and beginning the long journey of knowing him. Pay attention to what he enjoys and when he seems most himself. Be willing to linger in play with him for long periods of time. Watch for opportunities to talk around a task (more on this as we go along) as he develops more of an ability to speak and use his words. Allow him to lead in his play, assigning a role to you as a character within his play. His play will be an expression of his heart in this stage.

Acknowledging the limitations in his ability to use his words also means that we want to assist him emotionally. The Explorer feels strong emotions but doesn't know what to do with the emotions, so he will instinctively act on them – hitting, biting, screaming, crying, throwing objects and melting down. He needs help redirecting his emotions to something useful. He needs us to go with him to a safe place we've set aside for him to take the physicality of his emotions. He needs to hit a pillow or inflatable object, to jump and yell, to lay down and kick. He needs a place to feel the feelings and then some help in putting some words around those strong emotions. (For more on this, check out the Emotional Milestones in the *Are My Kids on Track* podcast.)

He desperately needs us to assess our expectations and our approach to him. He needs the boundaries and our responses to be in tandem with his unique wiring. He needs us to set realistic and achievable expectations for him.

Remember the Time

"For you have been my hope, Sovereign Lord, my confidence since my youth."

-Psalm 71:5

When I (Sissy) was in graduate school, one assignment they gave us was to write about our earliest memories. Their theory was that there is a reason that your earliest memory is indeed your earliest memory. It speaks to something about you... about who you were then, who you are now, and how the environment you grew up in shaped both.

I have two. One is of running in our driveway at an early birthday party and falling. We had one of those confounded aggregate driveways and somehow a rock came unglued and lodged itself in my knee. The next picture in my mind is of sitting on my kitchen counter with my mom bandaging me up.

The other is a scene from our spare bedroom...or from life growing up in the seventies, depending on your perspective. My cousin, Blair, had come over to play like he did often. One of our favorite activities was pushing the twin beds together in a V-shape, with each of us taking one bed, one hairbrush and belting out "I'm a little bit country, and I'm a little bit rock and roll" via Donny and Marie. And, if you're under the age of twenty, Donny and Marie had quite a career before Dancing With The Stars even existed.

Both memories are significant for me because they touch on two important pieces of my childhood. One is the comfort of my mom. The other is a sense of play. Both are still an important part of who I am today, although I'm a little more likely to sing and dance in my car than standing up on a bed with a hairbrush! (As a side note, however, David and I do often get compared to Donny and Marie when we're speaking together...and he's definitely a little bit rock and roll!)

What about you? What are your earliest memories? What kinds of emotions accompany those memories? What do they say about you? About your relationship with your parents? With others? And how do they affect the way you parent today?

I have a friend whose family didn't touch or say the words "I love you" while he was growing up. They definitely expressed love in other ways, such as through food and teasing each other. But there was no direct affection. As an adult, he would say it's much more difficult to express that kind of affection with his own family.

In our book, *Raising Girls*, we outline the importance of affection in a little girl's life. It also holds true for boys. "Study after study has outlined a baby's profound need for affection. In fact, they don't just need affection, they thrive, physically and emotionally, as a result of the physical care of their primary caregivers. As studies have also shown, babies who are not given this kind of affection are stunted in their development. Both the emotional lives and the future ability to caretake themselves is profoundly affected by the amount of nurturing given these infants. Toddlers need affection, too, but in shorter spurts..."¹

How was love expressed in your home growing up? And how did that expression affect the way you love your own son or daughter? As Melissa has reminded us, who you were then has a profound affect on who you are now, both as a parent and as a person. But it doesn't have to define you. We remember so that we can understand ourselves better, and also so that we can see God's faithfulness in the midst of whatever those early memories were. He was with you then—and He is with you now. And He is a God who redeems every memory, every pain of your past and turns it to good...for you and your child.

A God who Delights

"The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing."

-Zephaniah 3:17

I (Sissy) am not an art therapist. I'm not even an art-ist. I can draw stick figures, and that's about it. But I love art and have learned about it and how it can be a great tool in therapy from my godmother, who is a very talented art therapist. It is amazing to me the vast stores of information that can be gleaned with crayons.

Let's take a drawing of a family, for instance. I ask many girls to draw their family on one of their first visits to my office. The things to pay attention to are: size of each family member, placement of each family member, facial expressions, which body parts are included (if they don't have arms they feel powerless) and so on. Now, there are times when it might be easy to read too much into a child's drawing. But, over the years, there have been a few times when the meaning was obvious.

For example, one eight year-old boy drew his family in the center of the drawing playing a game together. He was sitting by a tree in the upper right hand corner. What would you guess this fellow was feeling? You guessed it...like an outsider with his family. He didn't fit and didn't feel like he was loved or wanted.

But there is one drawing that has particularly stood out to me over the years. It was of a twelve year-old girl who felt just the opposite. She drew a picture of her family gathered around the Christmas tree decorating it. They were smiling and all there in a circle around the tree...except for her. She was standing on top of the mantle with her arms outstretched upward, like "Here I am!"

If there was a word that I would use to describe how this girl felt within her family, it would be delighted in. Her parents did a fantastic job—maybe too good, according to the picture, of making her feel important.

It would be interesting to have your children draw pictures of your family. And it would be interesting, in fitting with the direction a lot of this picture takes, to see what you would have drawn of your own family growing up.

But I want us to go back to the verse in Zephaniah. I want to know where you would draw a picture of yourself in God's family. Really. Take a couple of minutes to think about it.

He would draw you as the one on the mantle. He wants you to feel so loved and delighted in that you would throw your arms up in front of everyone and say, "Here I am!"

God delights in you. He rejoices over you with singing. Take the moment that you saw your child smile for the first time, or heard him laugh, or saw her in her first dance recital. Remember the joy that bubbled up inside of you? That is delight. And that is what God feels in you every moment. He delights in you.

With all of this talk about delighting in your child, it may be hard at times. When he throws up all over your suit before work, when she flings herself on the floor screaming and crying at your parents' house for Thanksgiving, when he hits his baby sister...you could continue to fill in the blank. But just as 1 John 4:19 says, "We love because he first loved us." You can delight in your child because Christ delights in you. You are loved deeply, in a stand up on the mantle sort of way.

Discipline

We are asked questions about discipline daily within our work with parents and about every time we speak. The topic of discipline drives a number of questions, a range of emotions, and a variety of opinions. As we talk within this stage about setting realistic expectations, defining boundaries and allowing kids to wander away and return to us, it seems important to begin addressing discipline within our conversation about raising boys and girls.

Perhaps the most common scripture used within conversations about discipline involves the rod and spoiling. That scripture stirs the questions, emotions and opinions we experience when talking with parents around the topic of discipline. The questions stir emotions which give way to opinions about spanking, methods of discipline, and the mechanics of implementing discipline.

We tend to miss the rich instruction about the purpose of discipline that defines the how, when and why of discipline. The Message translates Prov. 13:24 this way, "A refusal to correct is a refusal to love; love your children by disciplining them." The purpose of disciplining our children is to teach them as a means of loving them. And if it is designed as a means of loving our children, our posture in discipline should be one of love, not of anger.

We talk as much with parents about the importance of them taking time-outs as we do about giving time-outs to their kids. Unless we are in a place to discipline in love (and often times our kids' behavior stirs everything but love in us), then we should do whatever we need to do so that discipline can be about teaching, about shaping and about loving our kids.

A mom I respect said, "I rarely ever discipline without giving myself at least a five minute 'time out' to really think about what I want to say, pay attention to what's going on inside of me, and pray for wisdom. And let's be honest, sometimes five minutes doesn't touch it!"

That's parenting in love with wisdom.

Loving and Leading

"Fathers, don't exasperate your children by coming down hard on them. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master."

-Ephesians 6:4, The Message

I (Melissa) have heard a lot of parents yelling lately. I may write a book called "Parking Lot Parenting," because it all seems to be in public places. The father grabs his son by the arm and jerks him out of the car. The mother yells at her daughter all the way in to the grocery store. These parents are not so well-acquainted with Paul's words to parents.

Don't exasperate your children by coming down hard on them. Don't yell at them in parking lots. Don't jerk them. Don't give excessive punishment or consequences. Don't put your child down with sarcasm. I know a fifty year-old whose father would yell at her as she was learning to tie her shoes. "You're not doing it fast enough! Are you stupid?" To this day, her hands still shake when she ties her shoes in a hurry.

Don't get me wrong. I know it's easy to get frustrated. Children in these years don't seem to understand the meaning of the word "Hurry" and the word "No" is questionable. But, God (and Paul) still say not to come down hard on them. Fortunately, God doesn't stop there.

I don't know about you, but I'm much more of a tell me what I can do, rather than just what not to do. If you only tell me what not to do, I focus on it and end up doing it more. Paul must have known a few folks like me. So, he gives us more....actually, two more things to help us in raising our sons and daughters.

1. Take them by the hand. John Calvin says "Let them be kindly cherished." God is telling us to have nurturing, intimate, loving relationships with our children. Hug your son. Take your daughter by the hand. Share the kind of affection, both physically and emotionally, that Sissy talked about in Remember the Time.
2. Lead them in the way of the Master. Lead them. To parent is to have strength...to be bigger than your child...to be an authority. You are to lead your child.

In these years, you teach your son and daughter who Jesus is. You impart your faith to them. You teach them how He lived and how they can live their lives in response. As you lead them in the way of the Master, you teach them what that way is.

Don't exasperate your children, but love them and guide them into a relationship with Jesus. You teach your son, your daughter who Jesus is as you reflect the way that He loves. To put it simply, you teach the way He loves by the way you love and lead them.

Opportunity

We are given so many opportunities in parenting. We began our conversation with Melissa introducing parenting as an opportunity to be stirred and to tap into our own stories. Our friend Dan Allender wrote a book called *How Children Raise Parents*. He discusses parenting as an opportunity for us to grow up as people, to be changed and transformed. Anne Lamott, an author whose work we enjoy, jokingly talks about parenting as an opportunity to connect with our insanity and rage.²

We'd say it's all of the above. It's also an opportunity to live the truth of the Gospel in front of our kids. Titus 3:4-5 says that "when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy." We're given a daily opportunity, in the lives of the kids we love, to live out the truth of that scripture, to love our kids for who they are. We're called to love them not for what they do, not how they perform academically or athletically, not for how well they behave or what choices they make, but simply for who they are. That's the kind of love and kindness that has been extended to us and how we're called to love. We weren't saved because of great choices we'd made or how we performed as people. In fact, we got the opposite of what we really deserved. We were saved because of His mercy. We have the great privilege of making that scripture real to our kids when we seek to love and enjoy them for who they are.

Surprise your son or daughter by leaving them a note under their pillow tonight. Write a note reminding them about how grateful you are for the gift of them. Let them discover the note and then read it aloud to them before bed.

Being Small

When we teach parenting classes, the parents who ask the most questions are always from the same population. They are parents of children in Stage 1—boys or girls.

As a parent of a young boy or girl, you most likely have a lot of questions. Do you take a list when you go to the pediatrician's office? Do you call your mom or friends and say, "When did your daughter start _____?" You are hungry for any information that will help you parent your child better. And, honestly, we're glad. It's why you're listening to this podcast and why you've downloaded this study. Your children will be glad, too. Information will help you be a better parent.

Information, however, can also make you very overwhelmed. And this is an overwhelming time as a parent. There is so much to learn and remember. There is so much for them to learn and remember. As we said before, there are just so many needs they have in these first few years. Their brains and bodies are changing rapidly. And your life has changed just as rapidly.

A mom of a newborn recently said, "I just can't do the things I used to. I don't have time to go to all of the Bible studies and book clubs. I'm too tired at night to stay up and read my Bible and my son is standing at the foot of my bed before I can even think of getting up in the morning for my quiet time. I just don't have time to study like I used to, but I sure know how desperately dependent I am on God."

What Jesus is saying in this verse from Luke is that we can be too wise at times. It is possible to be too big for God, but never to be too small. Understanding and information can, at times, lead to pride...to a puffed up sense that you've got it figured out. You know how to parent your child right. Don't, in your desire to get it right, neglect to receive from God.

God reveals things to little children...humble, receptive, dependent little children. So, rather than putting pressure on yourself to get it right, allow yourself to be dependent. You may be surprised at how God reveals himself to you right where you are. As you're reading your son the story of Noah's ark, God reminds you of a promise He still intends to keep. As you pray with your daughter, a co-worker comes to mind who needs your prayer, too. God speaks. He speaks into the heart of a child, no matter what that child's age. He needs our dependence more than He needs our wisdom. It's really His wisdom, after all.

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

In the preschool years, we'll simply recommend some children's authors we love, who've written multiple books for children of both genders. Please explore these authors and these series.

Books:

1. *Anything by Cynthia Rylant*
2. *Anything by Kevin Henkes*
3. *Anything by Eric Carle*
4. *Anything by Ezra Jack Keats*
5. *The Beatrix Potter Peter Rabbit Series*
6. *The Crockett Johnson Harold Series*
7. *The Arnold Lobel Frog & Toad Series*
8. *The Ludwig Bemelmans Madeline Series*
9. *The Don Freeman Corduroy Series*
10. *The A.A. Milne Complete Tales & Poems of Winnie-the-Pooh Series*

Movies:

For preschoolers, we'd recommend exploring the animated versions of the books recommended above. Many classic works of literature have now been made into films using the illustrations from the work.

Certain preschoolers and early elementary aged children will be ready to explore some more advanced films. You'll know your individual child's readiness for those animated movies.

1. *The Toy Story movies*

2. *Wall-E*
3. *Charlotte's Web*
4. *Finding Nemo*
5. *Inside Out*
6. *Frozen*
7. *Cars*
8. *It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown*
9. *A Charlie Brown Christmas*
10. *The Tale of Desperaux*

Notes

Stage 1

¹Melissa Trevathan and Sissy Goff, *Raising Girls*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 29.

²Anne Lamott, *Operating Instructions*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1993), 37.