

Week Two: *The World's Toughest Job*
Hebrews 12:5-11

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. What one word would you use to describe the parenting style of your family of origin? Explain your answer.
2. If you could change one thing about your mom, what would it be?
3. If you could change one thing about your dad, what would it be?
4. If you are a parent now, how has your parenting style been similar or dissimilar to your parent(s)?
5. Read Hebrews 12:5-11. Who disciplined you as a child?
6. Do you believe the discipline you received was too strict, too lenient, or about right? How did it shape you?
7. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray a prayer that reflects your feelings towards your childhood; i.e. thanksgiving, the need to forgive, or for lessons learned.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Read the story of Jesus' parents as recorded in Luke 2:39-52.
9. Out of all the possibilities, what do you think there was about Joseph and Mary that God chose them for the role of nurturing the childhood of his son, Jesus?
10. How does this story help us understand the importance of faith and religious practice as demonstrated by Joseph and Mary?
11. Did you grow up going to church as a child? Did both your parents demonstrate strong personal faith? If so, in what way? If not, how did that affect your relationship with God?
12. Obviously, Jesus' parents were not perfect and yet Jesus honored them as God expects of all children. How does this story help us as parents? How does this story help us as children?

13. Studies demonstrate that children develop patterns of worship based on the example of their father, but religious values based on the faith of their mother. Does that align with your experience?

14. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for young moms and dads in the midst of forming their parenting skills.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. As a child, how did your parent(s) treat you different from the neighbor kids?

16. Hebrews 12:5-11. Why do you think there is a link between discipline and respect?

17. How did these verses describe a child raised without discipline?

18. How does our parental relationship affect our basic relationship with God? Out of all the metaphors he could have chosen, why did God choose the term “Heavenly Father,” to describe his relationship to followers, calling them “his children.”

19. Did your parents practice the exact same standards of discipline on all your siblings? Why or why not?

20. What’s the difference between discipline and punishment?

21. Who suffered the punishment for our sins? (See Isaiah 53:5). How is God’s discipline of us different from punishment?

22. What’s the ultimate purpose of discipline: to pay for wrong, or course-correction?

23. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Give God thanks for the many times he has disciplined you through a “time out,” “course correction,” or allowed you to suffer the consequence of a wrong decision.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

24. Why do you suppose God designed reproduction of the human race to be done in such a completely dependent way? God could have designed a non-personal form of reproduction accomplished in a non-nurturing process, or even had new humans enter the world completely independent and as fully functioning adults. Why babies, born to people of different genders in a family of origin?

25. Do you think the biggest danger to parenting comes from indulging children or demanding too much from them?
26. What is the danger of either extreme?
27. One of the most important passages for Jewish believers is called the Shema. Read it in Deuteronomy 6:1-9. The word “Shema” comes from the Hebrew word, “to listen.” What does God say is so important?
28. According to the wisdom of Moses, what is the best way to pass these teachings on to our children?
29. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for the maturity to honor God’s design and seek his help in nurturing children, your own or the children of others.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

30. How would you describe God to a nonbeliever?
31. Read John 4:21-26. How does Jesus describe the nature of God in this verse?
32. See Romans 8:26 and 34. What role(s) do the Holy Spirit and Jesus as God’s Son play in granting us access to God as our Heavenly Father?
33. Now read Ephesians 6:1-4. What is the special promise God made to those who were obedient in word and deed to their parents? What special warning does God issue in this verse to fathers? Why is that caution especially addressed to fathers versus mothers?
34. When is the job of parenting done?
35. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Give God thanks for your parents and your children (as applicable). Ask him to help you maintain a spirit of love and acceptance despite the difficulty sometimes caused by hurt feelings or offense.