

God often grows our faith by giving us assignments that require us to step out of our comfort zone and trust Him to do what we cannot do. One such assignment is to be a parent or a spiritual parent/mentor. Both roles are intimidating. Our natural inclination is to take matters into our own hands, yet God calls parents and spiritual parents to exercise faith by doing what He calls us to do and trusting Him to do what we cannot do.

**PURSUE RELATIONSHIP:** *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

Who has been a spiritual parent/mentor to you? Talk about the experience.

**PURSUE GOD:** *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

*Observation and Reflection:*

1. Read Hebrews 11:6. What are the characteristics of a person of faith? (verses 7-12 give examples)
2. From Psalm 127:1-4, identify the principles for building a parenting or discipling relationship.
3. How does a parenting relationship resemble shooting an arrow? How does it resemble building a house?
4. However your parenting role is played out, can you identify what God's part is and where you need to take responsibility? Consider what the previous Scripture passages suggest about how these roles could be connected.

*Application:*

1. How do you point your child/disciple toward God?
2. In what ways can you balance the release of your child/disciple to God and your 'labour' in helping them grow?
3. How easy is it to entrust the people you love to God? What enables you to trust Him and rest in Him? (Ps 121:1-8)
4. What tension is there between being more Christ-centered and striving to be the 'perfect parent'?

**PURSUE SIMPLICITY:**

Finish this statement: 'For me to live is \_\_\_\_\_.' Use this as a mirror to examine your values, words, and use of your time during the next week. Are they in agreement with your statement? Why or why not?

**THE WORD (NIV)**

Heb 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Psalm 127:1-5

1 Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.

2 In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves.

3 Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him.

4 Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth.

5 Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate.

Psalm 121:1-2

1 I lift up my eyes to the hills— where does my help come from?

2 My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

Hebrews 11:6 – *For without faith it is impossible to please God ...* Nothing pleases God more than when we believe in Him and trust Him with our lives, making Him the object of our highest affection. Only then we can be all that He created us to be, knowing He has our best interest at heart. Yet, we will never know this until we move out of our comfort zone and learn to trust Him. God will do this by putting us in a situation or giving us an assignment that forces us to put our trust in Him. When we experience His faithfulness our trust increases. One such assignment is parenting. As Christ-Followers, we are called to parent someone. (Matt 28:18) This can be with a child or a disciple whom we mentor. Yet, as we build into the lives of our children, what is God's role, and what is our role?

1. A woman/person of faith points her children to God. (Psalm 127:1,4) This passage assumes that we are actively labouring in our God-ordained role, yet without God we are laboring in vain. God is the ultimate provider and protector of our children. We, however, are still called do what we can to provide for and protect them. (Prov 13:24, Eph 6:4) The most important role, though, is to point the child to God and a Christ-centred life. (Ps 127:4) Like a warrior pointing the arrow in the right direction, so is the role of a parent with the child. This will happen only if we are living the Christ-centred life ourselves. Paul knew what his highest value was – Christ. (Phil 1:21) Are you clear on what your highest value is? For you, to live is what? Our highest values permeate (to pass through the pores of something) our attitudes and everything we do or say. It is impossible to communicate a truth or principle to your child that you do not personally embrace. Nothing happens through you that isn't happening to you.
2. A woman/person of faith releases her children to God (Psalm 127:3,4) If the arrow is to fulfill the purpose for which it is made, it has to be let go. This means holding them with an open hand. Always remember, children are a gift from the Lord and entrusted to us. We are called to meet their needs as God identifies them, not to give into the child's every desire. Nor are children there to meet the parents' needs by living their lives vicariously through them. They are given to us so that we will take care of them, mentor them, point them to Jesus and help them embrace their identity and value in Christ, while instilling in them what is really important to them, which is preparing them to fulfill God's purpose for them. Might they go astray despite your best efforts? They may. Yet, whether it is a spiritual or biological child, we need to release them to God. This means we pray for them and love them, but to also stop playing God and to let go and let Him do what only He can do.
3. A woman/person of faith trusts God to do what she can't do in the life of her children. (Psalm 127:1,2) We can undertake an endeavor (career, marriage, children, etc.) with or without God, though we will not accomplish the task God has given to us if we leave God out of the picture. If God isn't building your family you'll never build it successfully. A woman of faith trusts God with her child's future. Are you entrusting the development of your child to someone else? Or are you overwhelmed in trying to be perfect parents by having every interaction, discipline, or experience be perfect lest they miss their potential? We must learn to lean on and trust God to do what we can't, and until we do we will not sleep soundly. God is God, and we are not; thus, we must not take upon ourselves that which God never intended for us to be responsible for.
4. A woman/person of faith trusts God with her child's security and safety. (Psalm 121:1,2, Psalm 121:1,2) Because we love them and fear for their safety and care about the impact their choices will have on their lives, we are convinced no one can protect or advise them better than we can. Thus, we play God in their lives. We are in place to protect, instruct and guide, though we must release them into the protective care of God. Safety is not found in a place (for no place is truly safe), but a person – Jesus Christ. God is the only one who can keep us and our children safe. A woman of faith does her best to protect her children's safety, but she doesn't obsess over it. Rather, she daily surrenders the safety and care of her family to the Lord knowing He is in control, can be trusted and has everyone's best interest at heart. In this is the source of joy and peace.
5. A woman/person of faith prays for her biological or spiritual children. This is the most important role of a person of faith. By praying we are saying our example or words are not enough, but that we need Him to do what we cannot. By praying we remind ourselves that we are not alone in our role as parent or mentor. By praying we are acknowledging that God is God and that you desire most of all that His will be done in the life of your child for His honor and glory.