

STUDY GUIDE

A stylized sunburst graphic with several short, straight lines radiating outwards from the top and bottom of the title text.

RAISING DISCIPLES

HOW TO MAKE FAITH MATTER FOR OUR KIDS

STUDY GUIDE BY LAURA JORY



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INTRODUCTION

Leaders: Take time to let your group get to know each other and establish context for where they're coming from as they approach this book.

1. In what way do you find yourself in a position to engage with and disciple kids?
2. What are you hoping for or excited about as you dive deeper into this book?
3. What are you nervous or apprehensive about?

CHAPTER 1

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

1. How would you define the “most important thing” in your life? How does your schedule/daily rhythm reflect this? Are there ways that your schedule or family rhythms seem at odds with what you value the most?
2. What is “the guilt trip clause” that the author outlines on page 26? How often do you find yourself feeling guilt as a parent? What types of things do you find induce guilt for you? What would it take to extend and receive grace for yourself in those areas?
3. Reread the passage from Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Think about the rhythms of your day; when do you think would be the best times for your family to pause and talk about things of Jesus?
4. Without judgment or guilt, think about your family’s approach to extracurricular activities. Do you think there is an opportunity to reassess how you schedule your family’s time? What feelings or reactions do you notice as you process this question?
5. At the core of *Raising Disciples* is the concept of having a Jesus-centered life. What does it mean to you to be Jesus-centered? What are some ways you could build in reminders of this underlying “why” into your family’s rhythms?

CHAPTER 2

FINDING OUR ENOUGHNESS

1. Do you worry about letting your kids down? Do you worry about your not-enoughness? Are there specific areas where these worries arise?
2. Without judgment or guilt, think about your family’s perspective on screen time. Has it been an intentional choice or a routine that you’ve more fallen into? Do you think there is a need to reassess your family’s approach to screen time?
3. How does it feel to you to hear “You are enough”? What reactions or emotions emerge? Is it easy or hard for you to believe? How could you receive God’s assurance of your enoughness? How is this connected to the journey of raising disciples?
4. What do you think is the significance of presence with our kids? What are times when you find it easy to be present with your children? What are times when it’s harder?
5. What kind of pace of life do you think Jesus is inviting you into? Is the pace of Jesus one you are currently experiencing? How does the pace of our lives affect spiritual parenting?

CHAPTER 3

OUTSOURCING DISCIPLESHIP

1. Do you have any feelings of insecurity in your own faith? How can we start from where we are and trust Jesus to be present in the gaps we perceive?
2. What was your own experience with Sunday school and/or church youth programs? What is your hope or perspective on these programs for your kids/family?
3. Is this an area where you need to “step into the tension” (p. 57)? Do you find yourself thinking that others would do a better job of discipling your kids? How can you start to undo the pressure and step into this role that you’re uniquely suited for as a spiritual parent?
4. What are some potential ways you could partner with the other spiritual leaders and teachers in the lives of your kids?

CHAPTER 4

DOWN-IN-THE-DIRT DISCIPLING

1. The author highlights the beautiful humility of children. What can we learn from what Jesus is inviting us into through these verses from Scripture and the example of children?
2. With no judgment, how would you describe your view of children? What is your reaction to them in the room? How do you think that affects the way you approach the discipleship of your kids?
3. Can you think of something you’ve learned from a child?
4. Can you think of any barriers you may be unintentionally creating for your children around faith and God? Perhaps start with any of your own hesitations or barriers with God and consider how that may affect the way you portray God to your kids.
5. The author highlights how Jesus raised the level of importance of children in his cultural setting (p. 65). How can we also elevate kids in our own cultural context?
6. What are we hoping for in the spiritual development of our kids? How can we create space for the practice of this? For the importance of this?

CHAPTER 5

MORALITY CENTERED OR JESUS CENTERED?

1. How would you differentiate between a discipleship that is morality-based and one that is centered on Jesus? Which of these feels more descriptive of your own growing-up experience?
2. Do you agree with the importance of sharing the “why” behind principles that we teach our kids? Why or why not?
3. Do you think that this approach of focusing on the why is appropriate for all ages? Explain why or why not.
4. On page 77, the author outlines her perspective of the “fullness of the gospel message”: Is there a part of this version of the narrative of Scripture that you learned as a child? Is there a part that you didn’t? What impact do you think that had on your perspective of God and faith as you grew up? How could you use that experience to reshape the way you approach discipleship with your own children?
5. Why do you think it’s significant to keep Jesus at the center of the narrative as we teach our kids about faith and God?

CHAPTER 6

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING

1. On a scale of one to ten, and without judgment or guilt, how natural and easy do you find it to talk about Jesus with your kids? What factors do you think influence your level of ease with this topic?
2. How important to you is it that you have regular conversations with your kids about Jesus? Do you find that Jesus moments come up naturally in the rhythm of your family? Why or why not?
3. The author frames several traditional Christian activities as “practices.” Have you thought about them this way before? Why do you think it could be a significant shift to think of them as practices?
4. Thinking through the practices of prayer, Scripture reading, worship, and giving, is there one that comes more naturally for you? Is there one that feels more difficult to step fully into? How about for your kids? Do you know which of these are more or less approachable for them?
5. Sometimes as parents we feel as if we’re always on repeat and never seeing any results. Can you think back to a time when your consistency and repetition in an area of parenting made a difference? How could you encourage and remind yourself that the long-game, repetitive work of spiritual discipleship is worth the effort and patience?

CHAPTER 7

SAY AND DO

1. Take a look at the questions to consider that the author outlines on page 96. Have you spent time thinking on these questions? It’s important for us to establish and remind ourselves of our own “why” for spiritual parenting as well. Do you feel that you have a solid starting point of following Jesus to begin from? What can you do to continue to deepen and grow your own understanding of what it means to follow Jesus?
2. Is there anything that you need to surrender to God in this season? How can you model both a humble listening and an obedient surrender to God for your kids?
3. Do you find it hard not to provoke your children? Are there certain contexts or times of day where it is particularly difficult? How could you practice and model responding with love and grace in these challenging moments?
4. How familiar are you with the practice of lament? What do you think is the value of this type of approach to our times with God? How could you include your children in the practice of lament?
5. What is one area of spiritual practice where you could step forward with a “say and do” approach this week? What experience with Jesus could you invite your kids into with you?

CHAPTER 8

STAGES OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Pause and pray as a group right now—it's such a gift to step into these practices in community. How do you feel about the encouragement to pray regularly? Is there a natural rhythm in your day where you could incorporate this practice?
2. When you think about your prayer life, what emotions arise? Remember that God speaks to us in ways that look like the fruit of the Spirit: with patience, love, and kindness. What is God inviting you into? What other voices or feelings are fighting for your attention in the midst of God's invitation?
3. Do you have people that you're learning from? What does that look like in your life? If not, how could you pursue finding someone who can be investing in you as a parent?
4. Are there some stages of a child's development that feel more known or comfortable to you? Are there some that feel like a mystery or maybe are even intimidating?
5. What do you think about the author's assertion that "when the Holy Spirit is active in a child, we cannot possibly think we can categorize the work of the Spirit in a simple way" (p. 117)? Have you thought about the Holy Spirit being active and present in your children? How does that shift or influence your perspective on spiritual parenting?

CHAPTER 9

RED BALL: BIRTH TO AGE TWO

Leaders: As we enter into these chapters about the stages of development, while the questions are worded in the present tense, encourage your group to consider their present, past, and future with their children. It's okay if they're not in the specific stage being discussed.

1. Are you surprised at the author's assertion that babies can learn significant spiritual truths in this first stage? Is your baby's spiritual development something you had previously considered at this stage?
2. What sorts of activities do you narrate for your child? How could you incorporate a Jesus-centered approach to this communication?
3. According to the author, why is it significant to have your child at church from this very early stage?
4. What is your perspective on the spiritual awareness and experience of children? Have you thought about this before? Have you had an experience that suggested children are more spiritually aware than we might realize?
5. From the practical suggestions offered for this stage, what stands out to you? Are there any suggestions included that surprise you for this stage of development? What is one of the suggestions that you're interested in trying or putting into practice?

CHAPTER 10

LITTLE BLUE APRON: AGES TWO TO FIVE

1. Why is it important for children of this age to have quiet downtime, according to the author? How do you or could you incorporate this kind of time into your child's routine?
2. Why is it important to tell our kids the stories from the Bible? How does the author suggest that we frame the telling of these stories?
3. Imitation is a significant learning strategy for children of this age. What are the things you'd like your children to imitate from your behavior? Are there things you'd rather they didn't copy?
4. How did the mom in the author's story incorporate a quiet time into her daily rhythm with small children? What is your reaction to that story? Does it seem like a realistic suggestion to you? Why or why not?
5. From the practical suggestions offered for this stage, what stands out to you? Are there any suggestions included that surprise you for this stage of development? What is one of the suggestions that you're interested in trying or putting into practice?

CHAPTER 11

COLORING THEIR WORLD: AGES SIX TO TEN

1. Which of the nine spiritual styles resonates with you? Which do you think may reflect the interests of your child or children?
2. What do you feel when your child asks questions that appear to question your family's faith or values? What does the author suggest as an approach or response to these types of conversations?
3. What are the five love languages for children as outlined by Ross Campbell and Gary Chapman (p. 147)? Which of these best represent your child or children?
4. Describe the author's case for sending your kids to a Christian summer camp. Do you agree with her perspective? Did you have a camp experience growing up? If so, how did it influence you?
5. From the practical suggestions offered for this stage, what stands out to you? Are there any suggestions included that surprise you for this stage of development? What is one of the suggestions that you're interested in trying or putting into practice?

CHAPTER 12

IN FLUX: AGES ELEVEN TO THIRTEEN

1. What is the main thing children are trying to define in this development stage? How do you think that intersects with their spiritual development?
2. What are some areas where you think it is important to have healthy boundaries during this stage of development? Share some ideas with your group about boundaries you've experienced or established.
3. What are the two essential practices that the author highlights for parents in this stage? Why do you think these approaches are so significant for this age group?
4. A child's relationship with media will likely shift during this stage; what approach does the author suggest around the different types of media kids will likely engage with at this time?
5. From the practical suggestions offered for this stage, what stands out to you? Are there any suggestions included that surprise you for this stage of development? What is one of the suggestions that you're interested in trying or putting into practice?

CHAPTER 13

FINDING GRACE: AGES FOURTEEN TO EIGHTEEN

1. Suddenly our children are experiencing significant pressure and expectations from several different fronts. What are some of these areas? Had you thought about the shift in who kids are accountable to at this stage? What does it mean for their spiritual development?
2. What do you think are the positives and negatives of an increased social media awareness for teenagers? How can we help equip our kids for the age of information in which they will grow up?
3. The author highlights the need for grace—both for our kids and for ourselves. What do you think it looks like to extend grace to your teenager? What does it look like to extend grace to yourself as a parent?
4. At every stage, our spiritual health as a parent is vital to our ability to raise disciples. How does it become arguably even more important as our kids reach the teenage years and beyond?
5. What is the author's perspective on the most age-appropriate time for kids to consider baptism? What reasons does she give for her perspective? Do you agree with her? Why or why not?
6. From this development stage forward, the author's practical suggestions shift to include ideas for parents alone and then parents with their kids. Why do you think this shift occurs? What is one of the suggestions for this stage that you're interested in trying or putting into practice?

CHAPTER 14

OPEN ARMS: EMERGING ADULthood AND BEYOND

1. Prayer is of course incredibly significant at all stages of spiritual parenting. Why does it carry extra weight once our kids reach their young adult years?
2. What lessons can we glean as parents from the biblical story of the prodigal son?
3. Why does the author encourage parents to “stay the course” with faith and presence even when it doesn't appear to be having an impact on the lives of their children at this stage?
4. What advice does the author offer to grandparents who may be involved in the discipleship of their grandchildren?
5. From the practical suggestions offered for this stage, what stands out to you? Are there any suggestions included that surprise you for this stage of development? What is one of the suggestions that you're interested in trying or putting into practice?

CHAPTER 15

BAD TIMING AND WHAT IF'S

1. What does the author mean when she says that “the best time to raise disciples is now”? How do you respond to the concept that we should be available and ready to engage whenever our children are ready?
2. The author outlines three main “what if” questions: Which one resonates the most with you?
3. What if I don't have the answers?
4. What if my child ultimately walks away from faith?
5. What if I've done this whole parenting thing wrong?
6. What encouragement does the author give for our parental hearts when we feel the weight of these “what if” questions rising?

CHAPTER 16

WHAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT THING AGAIN?

1. What is the most important thing to focus on when raising disciples?
2. When you think of “each day” as a significant opportunity to point to Jesus for your children, how do you feel? Excited? Overwhelmed? Both? How can we remind ourselves to lean into the strength and equipping of the Spirit as we approach the task of spiritual parenting?
3. Throughout the practical suggestions the author offers, there is a repeated reminder to listen intently to our children. How easy do you find it to really listen to your children? What are the things that make this easier or harder? Are there ways you could cultivate more authentic listening?
4. The book ends with a beautiful prayer (p. 195). Read the prayer together as a group and then take time to pray specifically for each other as you journey forward in raising disciples.