



PREGNANCY
RESOURCE CENTER

A place to find help and hope, care and compassion

Devotional Series:
The Value of Family



Family— a Divine Appointment

By Leanna Simpson, Agape Executive Director

I SAMUEL 1:10A

“And Hannah made this vow: “O Lord of Heaven’s Armies, if you will look upon my sorrow and answer my prayer and give me a son, then I will give him back to you. He will be yours for his entire lifetime...”

When I think about God’s orchestration and making of a family, I think of this passage. There are so many truths and weighted complexities that come from this story of Hannah, who is praying and pleading for a child.

First, she is acknowledging that only God can choose to give each of us the gift of a child and He ordains it. Whether we have carried this child or taken them in as our own, they were created by God and we have been commissioned with their rearing.

Second, a child is not our possession but a gift that should be stewarded and guided as a gift on “loan” from God for a season. Every child we are given was uniquely placed and designed to be a part of our family. There are no mistakes or coincidences with God.

Thirdly, a child is neither created or designed by us and their future should not be either. It is a great burden to steward a child. As they are a creation by the Divine Creator, it is with great gravity that we should forever and always understand that we must “give them back to God” and raise them up to know what is righteous and true through the grid of the Scriptures.

As we take our children into our arms and into our hearts, we must always remember to guide and steer their hearts toward the knowledge and love of a Savior. It is only knowing and learning about the One who created us that we can truly understand how to guide our children and love them well.

So today, no matter what this day brings forth, remember that **your family is a Divine appointment**. A grouping of souls, personalities, gifts, and challenges that God placed in your life to make you more like Him. Today, show up. It is your appointment. A Divine appointment set by God.

Scripture Reading:

I Samuel 1
Psalms 139
Ephesians 6

Worship Song:

The Blessing by Kari Jobe
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QnC7z03QkEM>



Parenting— Leading with Intention

By Leanna Simpson, Agape Executive Director

As I began to parent early on, I was challenged by a personal mentor to lead my children with a spirit of intention. Leading with the “end goal” in mind: Love God, Love Others.

I was encouraged to start talking, asking questions, and answering questions every day—starting the day they were born in an effort to weave conversations in an intentional, age-appropriate, and Godly way.

One of my foremost passions and topics was focused on how I valued their LIVES being brought into my life.

This concept of “LIFE-value” was walked out through many actions, conversations, and demonstrations.

Concepts such as these:

Teaching them that their grandparents and elders are

to be respected from day one because no matter how old you are you have value.

Teaching them to be a voice for the voiceless and a friend to the friendless because God calls us to value all people.

Teaching them that small babies and children must be protected and loved because those of us who are stronger must protect the weak.

Teaching them that God created men and women with special roles and gifts because this was part of his perfect design and plan.

Teaching them that people with disabilities are to be cared for and valued because God does not make mistakes but opportunities for His glory and His name.

Teaching them that they were created on purpose for a

purpose because He has a special plan for their life.

The best way to teach your child that life is innately valuable is to show them every single day that **THEIR life is innately valuable.** When we devalue one life, we ultimately are showing our children that LIFE is innately valueless and by deduction there COULD have been a reality where we might NOT have chosen them.

In a world that needs way more Jesus, we are being given a wonderful gift. God is giving us children to raise up. Disciples in the making underneath our roof!

Let us teach our children about the invaluable nature of life by teaching them about a loving God every day, raising them up in the Word, praying over them, thanking God for them, and cherishing how God gave us this gift of their life.

Scripture Reading:

Matthew 5:13-19
Psalms 40
Proverbs 22

Worship Song:

Way Maker by The Christ Church Choir
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S69RtFf-NhU>



Raising Leaders— Seeking God’s Face

By Dawson Simpson

My senior year in high school our world was turned on its head and life came to a screeching halt. The Coronavirus shut down the whole world and everyone, including me, began to reflect on who and what were their priorities.

During this time, I was given back “time.” A lot of it. I was able to reflect on who I wanted to be and who I wanted to spend my life around. The parameters of my days and the people in them were blown wide open.

I was able to spend time in the Word and I learned to trust God’s plans. As I had time on my hands, I had the time to read the Bible from cover-to cover and I imagine it must be what falling in love is like. As I read the Word, I began to fall more and more in love with the character of God. The more I began to know Him, I began to see His incredible faithfulness.

One of my favorite passage is from Exodus where God opened Moses’ eyes and for the first time Moses truly understood the character of the God he was serving. He turned from a reluctant prophet to the man who spoke to God face to face.

This passage became reflective of my own journey with God through Covid and I began to truly “see” God “face-to-face” through this time. It was through these moments that I realized what God was doing: He was using a pandemic to create a personal revival in my life.

If anything was to be learned from this year, I began to realize that despite our best laid plans, our lives can be laid bare in the blink of an eye and we are eternally at the mercy of God’s providence.

This year has tested our faith. It has polarized us to either focus more on this world or more on an eternal perspective.

So, as we look to our future and our future generations, I commission you to stay strong in your faith first. Look to the Scriptures to understand Truth. Fall in love with the character and beauty of God. Be alright with non-conformity to this world and seek to be the person who “sees” Jesus “face-to-face”. **Seek to allow God to use whatever means He desires to create a personal revival in your life.**

Scripture Reading:

Exodus 34:6-9
Luke 22:24-38
Psalms 121

Worship Song:

God of Revival by Bethel Music
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFWF9rSAWF8>



Faith— Your Kids are Watching

by Leanna Simpson, Agape Executive Director

As parents of faith, one of our foremost desires is that our children see Christ in us.

Living a life that represents our faith in Jesus Christ will result in living a life where we are willing to walk with the broken. Living a life like this will raise eyebrows and be against everything that this culture emulates and elevates. **But in choosing this kind of life, you are demonstrating to your family that this life is not about a pursuit of self...it is about a pursuit of Christ.**

Jesus acted and spoke to people the same- Everywhere. All the time. Without exception.

He **always** spoke truth in love. He healed the broken and was a friend to the friendless. He spoke to all people: no matter their gender, age, ability, culture, education, upbringing, status, faith background, or sin. He was a friend of sinners.

Now let me ask you this:

If Jesus were walking physically in this world today, who would you be to Him?

Would you be in the places, spaces, and conversations where you would meet Him? Would He be drawn to the person that you are?

Would it be enough to just know His name...or would you want to be close enough that He would know yours?

A few weeks ago, we sat across from a young girl. Homeless, beaten, hungry, addicted, dirty, scared...and now pregnant. We listened. We got her supplies. We offered to help her find shelter. We filled her car with gas. We heated her up a meal and talked with her as she ate. As I think about this young girl, I truly feel like she met "Jesus" that day. We were right where He would be in that very moment.

Let us each continue to sit at His feet. Let us continue to strive to know Him, be like Him, and be a friend to those He came to serve. Let us show our children in tangible ways what it looks like to live a life in the pursuit of Christ.

Show your family and those around you how God can use wounded soldiers, broken pieces, and broken lives to glorify Him. Let them see how God heals, extends grace, and grows your faith as you love others in the "hard".

The best way to show your children how to walk with the broken is to show them how Jesus walks with you. **Because you see, my friends, the broken is me... the broken is you.**

Scripture Reading:

Matthew 25: 35-40
Proverbs 103
Colossians 1:13-29

Worship Song:

Broken Vessels (Amazing Grace) by Hillsong worship with lyrics
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLIjxrJoWOk&list=RDLLIjxrJoWOk&index=1>



Trusting God— Letting Go

By Jodi Girard, Agape Office Manager

PROVERBS 22:6

*Train up a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

I am a control freak. There I said it. This verse in Proverbs has been my go-to parenting verse. I do what I'm supposed to, God does what He's supposed to, and all of my children will be fine. It's all under control. This very popular verse from the Old Testament is supposed to give us confidence as parents that if we are intentionally bringing up our children in the way God would have us, they will not depart from those ways. It is often misused as an absolute guarantee from God's Word rather than what it is, a proverb, an instruction, a guide that takes into account free will. The evidence is out there, good kids from good Christian homes walking away from their faith. So how are we to look at this verse then? What stands out to me most in this verse is God's subtle way of showing me as a parent that I am not in control. What?! That is a hard one for someone like me who likes to live in that illusion, "I have it all under control". I have the schedule perfected; I have clothes lined out, uniforms washed, meals prepared, homework organized, meetings planned, we sit in our pew every Sunday morning all pressed and pouring over our Bibles, our house runs like a well-oiled machine... well most of the time.

If I'm honest, that's just what goes on in my head. The reality of it is very different. Yes, my

children have played games in uniforms that were re-fluffed in the dryer. They didn't play much in the last game; they couldn't have gotten THAT sweaty right? Lunches packed? Does stopping by Casey's on the way to school and throwing some healthy-ish things in a used grocery sack from Fareway count? And thank goodness for those text reminders from doctor's offices. And Sunday mornings? Well, confession time...we were late, regularly, to ONLINE CHURCH in our own living room during the pandemic! HOW?!

Have I done a perfect job of training up my children in the way they should go? I have done my best as a sinful, fallen, tired, worn out, overbooked, overwhelmed mother of five. My husband and I have taken our charge very seriously, but as we have gotten older, we look back and realize not only are we not perfect parents, we are also not even close!

So here is my parenting truth:
I remind myself daily to let them go.

Trust God MORE than my plans, my lists, and my control...God's got this. AND He is enough, more than enough, for this job of raising my kids.

Scripture Reading:

Psalms 145
Romans 8:28
Luke 10:38-42

Worship Song:

I Surrender All by Casting Crowns
<https://youtu.be/nXzjLUN6Fd0>



Worship- It's a Family Affair

By Pastor Todd Stiles, First Family Church

Psalm 128, a Psalm of Ascent, was one of the family “songs” that the Israelites sang and chanted as they made their way up to the temple in Jerusalem each year for the various feasts.

Historically, families would make this pilgrimage together, traveling in caravans and convoys of donkeys, sheep, and goats. Add to this lots of children in tow, and a wild type of journey begins to form in your mind, doesn't it?

Knowing that, Luke 2:41-43 does not seem so far-fetched. It is the story of Joseph and Mary heading up to Jerusalem and, upon returning, discovering they had apparently lost Jesus. It seems odd to us that it took a whole day to realize this but, when you consider the cultural aspects of their pilgrimage, it is not hard to grasp the situation.

When Jesus wound up MIA, his parents probably assumed he was in the crowd somewhere, perhaps with a relative or friend. “No need to worry about Jesus,” Joseph may have said. “We'll see him at the campfire tonight.” But when campfire time rolled around, Jesus was not there. I wonder if a lump gathered in Mary's throat as she thought to herself, “Uh-oh -- we've lost God!”

Of course, the story ends with Jesus still back in Jerusalem, sitting in the synagogue conducting an eye-opening Q and A session with the religious leaders. That is where his parents, who were quite worried, found him, and that is when they re-started their journey back home, this time with everyone in tow.

Just like a typical trip today, complete with both mishaps and milestones, families in that day trekked together, making all kinds of memories along the way. I can imagine each day was filled with lots of surprises and unexpected blessings, as well as normal routines and die-hard traditions. They probably sang songs, played travel games, and told stories of pilgrimages gone by.

All in all, it undergirds Psalm 128 with a genuine family setting that helps the verses connect to us in the 21st century. I find it uncannily like our own patterns and habits. Granted, they had horses and camels and we have Hondas and Chryslers. But deep down, there is a peculiar and attractive unity that ties us together.

Piecing Psalm 128 and Luke 2 together, I have often wondered how they handled other typical family situations that come with children and traveling, like ...

... a toddler who had to stop every 30 minutes to go to the “bath-bush”?

... a five-year-old who was new to the family Psalms and could not get a grip on the words?

... a teenager who felt the music was not very cool?

... siblings arguing over how much space they had on the back hump of the camel?

... dads threatening the kids with their infamous line, “Don't make me come back there”?

Seriously, while we do not have any answers to those comical what-ifs, we do know that at least one non-negotiable was honored: It was

continued....

a family affair. Yes, even with the bumps and bruises and amid the highs and lows, they journeyed toward God with one another. It was their annual ascent to the Temple, and they climbed together in harmony, both musically and spiritually.

It is my prayer that families today will intentionally take the time to seek the Lord

together. The methods may be different, but the mandate remains the same: worshiping God is a family affair. So grab your Bible, select a Psalm, and start. It may be chaos initially, but it will be a tremendous first step towards forming Christ-like character in those under your own roof.

Scripture Reading:

Psalms 128
Luke 2

Worship Song:

No Longer Slaves by Voices of Lee

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QANH8MWuyaE>



Prayerful Parenting through the Scriptures

By Jodi Girard, Agape Office Manager

I'm realizing now, as my children have gotten older and started moving out of our house and making their own decisions, the most important thing I have ever done for my children is give my life to Christ. And then pray like crazy and get out of God's way! God doesn't need me to be a perfect parent, He doesn't need me at all. His desire is FOR me to have a close and personal relationship with Him. His desire is FOR me to know Christ and to live for Christ. **His desire for my children is the same.**

If Jesus is first in my life, my parenting will fall in line. This realignment in my thought process has not so much changed what I pray, but how I pray and the peace I have on the other side of those prayers.

Here are some verses I pray over my children regularly:

I pray for God to cause a yearning so strong in them that they give their hearts to Christ.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

I pray for God to cause them to long for a better understanding of Him.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 3:18a

I pray for God to cause them to desire His Word as much as the very food they eat.

They [God's statutes] are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. Psalm 19:10

I pray for God to cause their heart to want to really KNOW Christ.

I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. Philippians 3:10-11

The difference is not just praying that these things will happen to them but praying that God's presence will surround them so much that He physically causes their bodies to long for Him. When I lay myself aside, let God lead and pray these scriptures over my children, I have the peace that comes with a complete submission to God's providence. He knows my longings for my children before I utter a word. I know that God hears my prayers. I know that He is still writing the pages of my children's stories.

Today, I choose once again to hand my children over to God. I pray God will help me release my grip on their hand and replace my hand with His own.

Scripture Reading:

Psalm 143
John 14
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Worship Song:

Pray by Sanctus Real
https://youtu.be/a_J4l4gsvYA