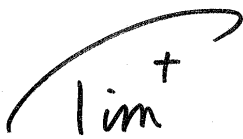


What Size Are God's Shoes?
Kids, Chaos and the Spiritual Life

Discussion Guide for Parents

Welcome to the Discussion Guide for *What Size Are God's Shoes?* I'm delighted you're interested in forming a discussion group for parents of young children. It's my hope that these essays will spur conversation and serve as a "jumping off point" for your own discussions. The book certainly isn't a "how-to" manual for finding God in domestic chaos – we all do this through trial and error. But I trust the exchange of ideas and experiences in your group will help everyone deepen their relationship with God, their children and other parents in the community.

Faithfully yours,



The goals of this three-session program are to:

- a) Help parents share the experiences of raising young children in the Christian faith – the challenges, frustrations and joys.
- b) Deepen relationships among parents by providing a supportive peer group, one that can continue to develop long after the sessions themselves have concluded.
- c) Assign no homework! Parents are already stressed out enough. The discussion topics will be based on several of the essays in "God's Shoes" which are all short enough to be read aloud during the sessions.

Some helpful hints in forming your group:

- a) Offer to provide child care so parents can fully engage in conversation.
- b) Plan on each session lasting an hour and a half.
- c) Physical space can deeply impact the quality of dialogue. Create a space that welcomes relaxed conversation; sitting in a circle on comfortable chairs is ideal.
- d) It's important to allow everyone a chance to speak. If you find several people dominating the conversation, consider using the process of "mutual invitation." After a person speaks to a particular question he/she then invites someone else in the group to speak. "Passing" is allowed.
- e) Remember that this is a discussion "guide." Feel free to adjust the number or length of the sessions. If there are other essays or questions you'd like to explore, go for it! This guide is simply a tool to get the conversation started.
- f) Food is always a plus – it's helpful to provide snacks and drinks for adults (and children).
- g) Publicity before the first session is important. Feel free to use the book's cover art in your promotional flyers and articles.
- h) While there's no "homework" it's helpful to order the books in advance of the first session.
- i) Enjoy one another and have fun!

Session I

Read aloud “The Sound of Silence.”

How do you make room for silence in your life? What are some of the daily challenges you face in finding time for silence? When you’re successful at carving out those moments, what works? What doesn’t? What are the consequences when you neglect your spiritual life? What do you hear God calling you to do at home/at work/at church?

Read aloud “What Size Are God’s Shoes?”

Share some questions your children have asked you about God. How did you respond? What are some basics about faith you think are important to impart to your children? What are some examples in your life that the message is “getting through?”

[Ten minute break]

Read aloud “The Power of the Dark Side.”

Name some of your children’s interests or passions for which you share no enthusiasm. Do you encourage them? What interests of your own are you excited about sharing with your children? In what ways do you share these experiences with them? How do you share your passion for God?

Read aloud “Fairness Doctrine.”

How does sibling rivalry play out in your home? Specifically how does the adage “Life isn’t fair” relate to your family? How do you distinguish between equality and fairness? Do you ever find your family’s values to be at odds with those of your local community? How do you deal with this?

Session II

Read aloud “Wedding Bells.”

How do your children’s friendships impact their development? How do you handle a situation where you feel a friendship is negatively impacting your child? Share the experiences of your child’s first sleepover? Explore what it means to be “stewards” of your children rather than their “owners.”

Read aloud “Ghost Stories.”

What are some of your children’s deepest fears? How do you alleviate them? What are some of your fears as a parent? How do you balance these fears with trust in God?

[Ten minute break]

Read aloud “Jesus in the Mudroom.”

Do you have a mudroom or its equivalent in your house? Is it as chaotic as the one you just read about? How do you transition into and out of the various roles in your life – spouse/parent/employee? What are your specific challenges and frustrations of seeking to balance these roles? How does your faith help you manage the stress?

Read aloud “Thank You Note.”

What parental tasks do you find particularly thankless? In what ways, verbally or otherwise, do your kids thank you? In what ways do you give thanks to God? How do you teach your children to give thanks to God?

Session III

Read aloud “Portrait of the Artist.”

What do you do with all your kids’ “stuff?” What emotions make you want to keep it all? How do you deal with the reality that your kids are getting older and less needy (besides the initial euphoria)? What piece of their childhood do you want to hold onto the most? What are you ready to give up?

Read aloud “Germ Warfare.”

What are some ways in which you’re overprotective as a parent? In what ways do you encourage your children to explore and find their own way? Do you ever limit their interests based upon your own preferences?

[Ten minute break]

Read aloud “Drive-Thru Window.”

What are some things that make your children *temporarily* happy but don’t last? Do you have trouble saying “no” when they ask for these things? What do you consider the foundation of a happy childhood? How does the spiritual life fit into building a life of joy?

Read aloud “Party Animals.”

Share some of your children’s best/worst birthday party experiences. How might you use a child’s birthday as an occasion to remind them of God’s love? How do you feel about your own birthdays at this stage in your life – excitement, anxiety, a combination? How do your children deal with unstructured time?