



## Session 4

Don't get distracted

When we teach our children about God, it is so easy to focus on the stories. Sometimes our children can picture every detail of Daniel in the lion's den but are not sure what any of that has to do with them! If we believe that God wants to know and have relationship with all of our children, then we have to be intentional in how we share God with them.

A subtle shift in how we talk to our children around Bible stories, testimonies and worship songs can be a big step towards building faith. It's tempting to share Bible stories focused on the events – as that's mostly how we remember them – but we want our children to understand what God is saying about His character through the story.

For example, if we are telling the story of creation, we may share the steps of what God did, but our children need to hear the truths about God that the story shows us:

- 'God made everything and says it is good'.
- 'God made me and says that I am good'.
- 'God made me to be like Him'.
- 'God made me for relationship with Him'.

As each of these principles is pointed out, children will begin to connect together a picture of who God is, who they are and why they are here, rather than just wondering if it all really happened in seven days.

As they explore these principles, God will build on them, growing faith in their lives. There was a three-year-old in church recently who was encouraged by his mum to ask God if He had anything to say to him during the worship session. He told his mum that God said, “I am good.” He then went out to his children’s ministry session and heard the story of creation where each child was pointed to and told, “God made you and said you are good.” The boy left that day having heard both a truth about God and a message from God Himself.

We can keep building truths and principles into our children about who God is through storytelling. Then in life we can point out these truths as we see them in everyday life. If a child spots a bug on the floor we can draw their attention back to the truths of creation: “God made the bugs and He said they are good – God made you and He says that you are good! He made you because He wants to know you!”

Our children need to be able to see bits of our relationship with God – just as they learn how to eat by watching how we sit and feed ourselves, they learn how to relate to God by watching, learning and trying. So we can share appropriate bits of our stories with them, keeping the emphasis on who God is. For example, I might talk about how I made some mistakes today, but that no matter what I do, I know God loves me, forgives me and still wants to know me!

We need to encourage our children to test these truths for themselves. I know my kitchen chair can hold me because I have tested it a lot, but if you made me a chair and told me it was strong, I would have more faith in it once I had sat on it myself. We can encourage our children to ask God their questions, or ask Him what He says about them, setting an expectation in them that God wants to speak to them, however young they are.

When our children do experience something of God, we need to point them to the character of God in it and not just the action. For example, a child who experiences God healing them may quickly focus on the fact they are healed, which is great. But we can guide them to thank God because:

- He is our healer.

- He loves them and wants them to be well.
- He is powerful and there is nothing He can't do.

They will see these truths played out in their future experiences in life and faith will grow as they experience God in different ways.

Building faith in our children is a journey and our responsibility as parents is to direct them to relationship with God. We need to recognise it is about lots of small moments and fewer giant moments that will build their faith. God made us for relationship with Him in every moment of life.

That doesn't mean we lower our expectation, quite the opposite! We know God made us to know Him. We know our children have access to the same Holy Spirit as us (not a mini version) and so we know that God is able to meet with our children however small they are. Don't delay building faith in your child because you think they are too young. From birth you can tell the stories, point out God's truths and repeat them - in the buggy, in the bath, wherever you are.

Let's have high expectations that our children's faith will grow big and that God will meet with each one of them.

### **Principles:**

#### **1) Our role as parents is to direct our children to God**

Proverbs 22:6 'Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.' (NIV UK)

#### **2) It is more important that our children know who God is and what He thinks of them than that they have familiarity with Bible stories. Knowing God's character builds discernment.**

Psalms 34:8 'Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him'. (NIV UK)

2 Samuel 22:32-34 'For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the rock except our God? It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my

way secure. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he causes me to stand on the heights.' (NIV UK)

- 3) Building faith in our children is a journey of small but proactive moments in everyday life.**
- 4) We can have high expectations of God meeting with our children and growing a big faith in them.**

### **Questions:**

- Which characteristic of God is most significant to me today and how could I share that with my child in little ways?
- What testimonies do I have that I can share with my child that point to a particular characteristic of God?
- When I look at stories of God for myself, do I focus more on the story events or on who they show God to be? Do I need a readjustment in this?
- Am I intentional in sharing who I know God to be with my child? How can I grow more in this?

### **Practicals:**

- Ask God for opportunities to show your children His character in their everyday life – be intentional in pointing it out to your child. For example, if your child is scared of the dark, you can tell them that God tells us not to fear anything because He is our protector and He is King over all things.
- Play worship music in your home that the children hear, things that speak of God's truths and who He is. Talk to them about the lyrics.
- Tell your children Bible stories which focus on who God is. This will look different across the ages. Begin asking your child what God is showing us about Himself in each story.
- In a church meeting, translate for your children small bits of what God is showing of Himself as the meeting goes on. For example, what the words of a song say about His character, or what a testimony or Bible passage says about God, or what you are thanking God for in His character today.