

18 SUMMERS

Leader Conversation Guide – 18 Summers: Intentional Parenting

Main Idea

Parenting doesn't come with a manual—but it does come with grace. Even with the best intentions, it's easy to slip into common mistakes: assuming our kids are okay, relying too much on others, reacting emotionally, or forgetting our influence.

In Luke 2, Mary and Joseph momentarily lose track of Jesus, reminding us that even good parents can miss what matters most. But God calls us to lead our children with purpose—through presence, correction, and love.

As we begin this conversation, let's invite God to help us parent with intention, not perfection. He's with us every step of the way.

**Start children off on the way they should go, and
even when they are old they will not turn from it.**

PROVERBS 22:6

Make It Practical

Common Parenting Mistakes

1. We assume our children are okay.
 - Luke 2:43–44 – Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, and His parents didn't notice at first.
2. We expect others to parent for us.
 - Ephesians 6:4 – “Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”
3. We allow their decisions to affect us.
 - Luke 2:48 – “Your father and I have been frantic...”
4. We respond emotionally.
 - Ephesians 4:26–27 – “In your anger do not sin... do not give the devil a foothold.”
5. We end up frustrated and confused.
 - Luke 2:49–50 – “But they didn't understand what He meant.”

Intentional Parenting

1. Accept your role in their life.
 - Proverbs 22:6 – “Start children off on the way they should go...”
2. Create opportunities to listen.
 - James 1:19 – “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.”
3. Don't be afraid to correct them.
 - Proverbs 13:24 (MSG) – “Love your children by disciplining them.”

Talk About It

In what ways have you found yourself assuming your child (or someone you're mentoring) is "okay" without really checking in?

- Read Luke 2:43–44. How can we become more intentional about truly knowing what's going on in the hearts of those we're leading?

What's the difference between responding emotionally and responding wisely in parenting (or leadership)?

- Reflect on Ephesians 4:26–27 and discuss how unchecked emotions might give the enemy a foothold in our homes or relationships.

Why is it important to embrace correction as part of love?

- Look at Proverbs 13:24. How can we reframe discipline as an act of love rather than punishment?

**Our kids don't want someone to be like them,
they want someone they can be like.**

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift and responsibility of influence—whether as parents, mentors, or leaders. Help us to lead with wisdom, love, and intention. Forgive us for the times we've been passive or reactive, and guide us to be present, patient, and purposeful in every relationship You've entrusted to us. Strengthen our hearts to follow Your example and to lean on Your grace in every season. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Next Steps:

Check in intentionally – Don't assume your kids are okay. Take time this week to ask meaningful questions and really listen to their heart, not just their habits.

Own your role – Reflect on where you may be outsourcing your influence (to teachers, coaches, or church) and make one intentional move to re-engage in your child's spiritual and emotional development.

Respond with love, not reaction – Commit to pausing before responding emotionally. Pray for patience, and practice correcting with calm, consistent love.