

## Parenting Talk #2 – Make It Personal

### Script

I remember when I had my first and second babies. They were just fifteen months apart. Money was tight. Gary, my husband, was working hard and building his career. It was a stressful and busy time in our lives. Then came along two more babies. We were a family of six in the span of a few short years! I'm not recommending that everyone do it that way, but that's the way we did it.

I'm telling you this because I want you to know that I can relate to the busyness that is going on all around you. I can relate to the lack of sleep. I can relate to the lack of a babysitter. I can relate to the lack of time to take care of yourself and your relationships. I know that it isn't easy to put yourself first. The very nature of parenting makes it almost impossible.

I recently met with several groups of parents who have raised their kids and are further down the road than you are today. I asked them what advice they would want to give a new parent just starting out. These were not perfect parents, but parents that I had watched, parents that I respected, and parents who were engaged and involved with their kids.

The first thing they told me is that time passes quickly, and before you know it you are face to face with a young man who wants the keys to your car! He's no longer a baby. So do the things that matter most now. Your time is limited, and your influence is greatest when they are young. Carey talked to us about that a little bit in the first talk.

The second thing they told me is to remind parents that they cannot give what they do not have. In other words, if you want to give your kids a clear picture of what it looks like to have loving and healthy relationships, then you've got to show them what it looks like to invest in your marriage, model forgiveness, and give love. Tons of studies tell us that one of the greatest gifts you can give your child is a healthy marriage.

Now, I want to stop for just a second and recognize our single parents. I know that you have a huge weight of responsibility on your shoulders. I cannot completely imagine how you must feel. But here's what I want to tell you. Gather people around you and build strong relationships so that you can get the extra support that you need. Look to your family. Look to your small group. Find those significant relationships in your life and make them a priority.

Parents, if you want your children to learn how to have healthy relationships, then you've got to put in the time and effort that is needed to help your own significant relationships grow.

Really think about this, if you want your children to know how to have a growing relationship with Jesus, then you have to model your own relationship with your heavenly Father. Your children need to see you circling up with other believers, learning, and gaining accountability and encouragement on a consistent basis with those who help you grow in your faith. They have to see you putting your own time with God first.

They have to hear you talk about Him and watch you make decisions based on what God wants for you and your family. You have to include them in the discussion during the hard times and during the happy times as you turn to your heavenly Father and trust Him. These are the parts of your life that are lived out daily. These are the things that make a huge impact on your child. This is how your child knows what it looks like to follow God.

Here's your homework: Write down two things that you are going to DO to invest in yourself and your relationship with your spouse. Maybe you are going to set a date night. Maybe you are going to get a babysitter. Maybe baby goes to bed early so that you have time together at the end of every day. Maybe you're going to go for a walk every night after dinner and just talk. These kinds of practical decision can make a huge impact on your relationships over the long haul. Decide right now what two things you're going to do and write them down.

Okay, so here's the second part of your homework. How are you going to continue to grow in your relationship with God? Remember, you cannot give and you cannot model, what you do not have yourself. At the end of it all, nothing else will matter but *your* relationship and your *child's* relationship with God. That's what will matter the most. This time that I'm talking about doesn't have to be overwhelming. It doesn't have to be big. Decide two more things that you are going to do to take the next step in your faith and write them down. I'm talking about a few intentional moments each day.

Maybe you decide to join a small group. Maybe you end every night with a quiet time and just open your heart to God. Maybe you commit to attending a service on a consistent basis. Maybe you read one chapter from the book of Proverbs every day. I don't know what it is for you, but I challenge you not to let the busyness of your current stage of life keep you from becoming the parent that you need to be.

My hope and prayer for you as you begin this journey as a parent, is that you would be able to look back one day and see the little things, the consistent things, that you did throughout your whole life to make your relationships and your relationship with God a priority. That the busyness and pressures of life would not have become the things that you modeled and taught your kids. I hope your children can claim to have been influenced by parents who prioritized their own personal growth and left a rich investment and example in the hearts and lives of their kids.

### Intro to Sue's talk:

One of the most exciting things about Baby Dedication Celebration for us as ministry leaders is this opportunity that we have to partner with you, the parents, as you raise your kids. We know that parenting isn't always easy and that you can sometimes be unsure of the next step you should take. As your church, we want to be your biggest cheerleader, your greatest support and your trusted guide.

I'm excited for you to hear from Sue Miller. Not only has she made an incredible investment in thousands of children during her years in ministry, but she is also the mother of two of the greatest kids you will ever meet. One of those kids serves with me in ministry, and I'm here to tell you that Sue got a lot of things right!

I know you will learn a lot from her, and I know beyond a doubt that you will walk away from this final talk encouraged! Because encouragement is one of the things that Sue does best!

Here is my last question for you as you listen to Sue's talk: How will you partner with your church to lead your child in a relationship with their heavenly Father?