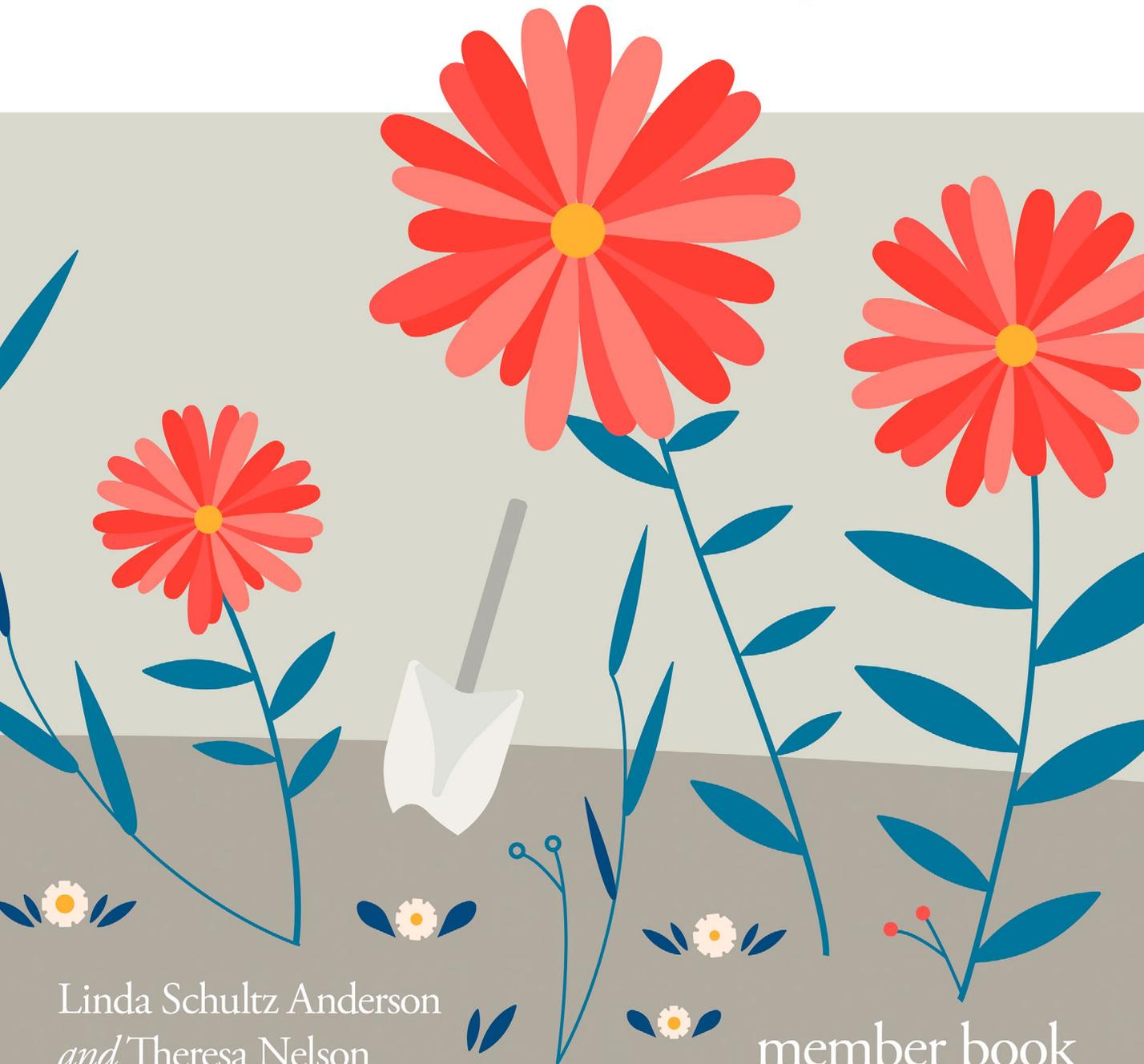


mom  to mom<sup>®</sup>

# *Real Mom Life*



Linda Schultz Anderson  
*and* Theresa Nelson

member book

“teach the older women to . . . teach what is good.  
Then they can train the younger women to love their  
husbands and children.” —Titus 2:3–4





# *Real Mom Life*

Member Book

Theresa Nelson  
Linda Schultz Anderson

*with a guest lecture by Drs. Paul and Virginia Friesen*

Mom to Mom Ministries, Inc.

[momtomom.org](http://momtomom.org)

*Real Mom Life Member Book*

©2019, 2022 Mom to Mom Ministries, Inc.

Mom to Mom is a trademark of Mom to Mom Ministries, Inc.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted in writing by the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed in writing to [info@momtomom.org](mailto:info@momtomom.org).

Bound Version ISBN: 978-0-9897951-5-9

Cover design and Illustration: Ansa Stamper

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are from the King James Version.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright ©1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked The Message are take from THE MESSAGE. Copyright © by Eugene H. Peterson, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

To order additional copies of this resource or to learn about related resources, visit [www.momtomom.org](http://www.momtomom.org) or e-mail [info@momtomom.org](mailto:info@momtomom.org).



# Contents



*Acknowledgments* . . . . . 4

*About the Authors* . . . . . 5

*Real Mom Life: Introduction* . . . . . 7

## **Mom Life**

1. Mom, You Made a Great Choice . . . . . 9

2. Can You Really Love Your Kids *and* Your Life at the Same Time? . . . . . 15

## **Family Life**

3. Ages and Stages: A Party Planner’s Guide to Phases of Family Life . . . . . 21

4. Don’t Give In to the Extremes . . . . . 29

5. Allowing Kids to Fail: A Crucial Part of the Learning Process . . . . . 35

6. Screen Time: Using Media to Build Rather than Detract . . . . . 41

7. Partnering with “Grandma,” “Nana,” and “Gigi” . . . . . 47

## **Married Life**

8. Marriage: Dancing Lessons for Husband and Wife . . . . . 53

9. Magnetic Marriages: Opposites Attract—and Then Repel? . . . . . 59

## **Community Life and Unique Circumstances**

10. A Mom’s Guide to Navigating Educational Differences . . . . . 65

11. Hidden Losses of Mom Life: Infertility, Miscarriage, and Adoption . . . . . 73

12. Teens, Tweens, and Self-Esteem . . . . . 79

13. Hope and a Future for the Strong-Willed Child . . . . . 85

## **God’s Grace for All of Life’s Circumstances**

14. When You Feel like a Failure . . . . . 91

15. Giving Your Kids Roots and Wings . . . . . 97

16. I’m Glad . . . I Wish . . . I Pray . . . . . 103



# Acknowledgments



With gratitude for the many who have taught us, loved us, and encouraged us throughout the various chapters of our own real lives as moms.

- Linda's family: You have taught me how to be a wife, mom, mother-in-law, and nana. (And I am still learning.) You have given—and give me—joy beyond words. (3 John 4)
  - My precious husband, Woody
  - My children (including spouses!): Bjorn and Abby, Lars and Kelly, Erika and Richie
  - My grandchildren: Bengt, Soren, Gabriella, Hannah, Nils, Judah, Evangeline, Annika, Lachteen, Linnea, and Lars
  - My parents, Sam and June Schultz, who still, I believe, pray for me in Heaven. And my dear Aunt Martha and Uncle Dave, who continue their prayers here on earth.
- Theresa's family:
  - My husband, Don, who loves, protects, and provides for our family. Don, you support me in my mission as a mom and you believe in me, especially when I don't believe in myself. I love you with certainty.
  - My beautiful daughters, Anna and Erin, who bring such joy and energy and laughter into our home. You teach me something new every day and my life is fuller because of both of you.
  - My parents, Tom and Ann Hanlon, who taught me the value of hard work and the importance of family, faithfulness, and follow-through.
- Chris Peters and the entire video production team at Lightmark Creative. Thank you for your creativity, expertise, commitment to excellence, and patience with us!
- Our Mom to Mom Titus 2 leaders and sisters, both in our local Mom to Mom program and across the country. Those of you nearby have held us with your practical caring and your prayer. Many of you across the country have shared your stories, opened your lives, and encouraged us across the years.
- The Mom to Mom Prayer Team: How would we ever have gotten through taping week without your being on your knees—and holding up our arms and cheering us on?
- The Mom to Mom Board: Tonya, Polly, Connie, and Barbara. Our “knee pads” are worn. But our arms are still locked and our hearts are full of joy.
- All the moms of Mom to Mom across these many years: Loving and encouraging and teaching you has been, next to our families, the very best thing in our lives. You are some of the most thoughtful and intentional women we have ever known. You inspire us!
- Our great and powerful God: Thank you for your mercy, love, and grace in all the chapters of our own *real mom life*, and for giving us the opportunity to do the most rewarding job ever. Thank you for showing us that you really are a Light for all seasons. You continually surprise us with how life-giving that Light is—even in the harder places in life. Thank you for bringing Mom to Mom to be, and for allowing us to be a part of your glorious work.

*But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I may show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. —Exodus 9:16*

Indeed, Lord, we want to see your name proclaimed in all the earth!





## About the Authors



**Linda Anderson** founded Mom to Mom in 1991 because of her love for God's Word and her love for moms. At that time, she could never have imagined how God would grow both her own family and Mom to Mom.

Linda has a background as an educator and reading specialist. She has taught in both public and Christian schools and has also served as a pastor of adult education. She loves encouraging people—all people, but especially moms—through sharing God's Word. She has traveled and spoken at conferences, retreats, and moms' groups throughout the U.S. and beyond, but nowadays she stays a little closer to home, delighting in her ministry of praying and mentoring as Mom to Mom moves into a new chapter.

Next to her grandchildren, Linda's four favorite things are reading, taking long walks, coffee (especially with friends), and chocolate (just keeping it real here). Travel these days is mostly to either Kodiak, Alaska, where four wonderful grandkids currently live, or Cork, Ireland, where four other equally wonderful grandkids are. Thankfully, the other four grandchildren live just over an hour away here in New England.

Linda loves encouraging moms as well as Titus 2 leaders with the Hope that transcends all life's changing seasons: “. . . *we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.*” (Hebrews 6:18b–19a)

**Theresa Nelson** first participated in the Mom to Mom program as a new mom in 2002. Since then she has served as a Titus 2 leader, speaker, writer, and more recently, as a board member with Mom to Mom Ministries. She has a professional background in high tech public relations, but discovered a new passion for encouraging and empowering moms after becoming a mom herself. She teaches classes on family and marriage at churches and parenting groups and delights in equipping the next generation of parents to create healthy families and healthy homes.

Theresa loves hiking and spending time in nature, especially on Cape Cod in Massachusetts. She also enjoys traveling and learning about different cultures—especially food! She loves to cook and host dinner parties for family and friends in her home.

Theresa and her husband, Don, live in Lexington, Massachusetts, with their two teen-aged daughters.





*Drs. Paul and Virginia Friesen* have been involved in Family Ministries for more than 40 years through family camps, church staff positions, speaking, consulting, and writing. They are the founders of Home Improvement Ministries ([www.HIMweb.org](http://www.HIMweb.org)), a non-profit organization dedicated to equipping individuals and churches to better encourage marriages and families in living out God's design for healthy relationships.

Between them they have authored more than fifteen books and curriculums on parenting and marriage, including *Letters to My Daughters*, *Before You Save the Date*, *The Marriage App*, *Raising a Trailblazer*, and *Lovin' Your*

*Wife Like Christ When You Ain't No Jesus*. They each have their doctorate in Marriage and Family Therapy from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Paul and Virginia were married in 1976 and are the parents of three young adult women, two of whom are now married to wonderful, Godly men. Their middle daughter is living fully for Christ as a single woman and trusting God for His best. Paul and Virginia's greatest joy in life is knowing that their children are "walking in the truth."



## *Real Mom Life: Introduction*

*Real Mom Life* is an answer to prayer. For several years the Mom to Mom Ministries Board has wanted to produce a fourth year of Mom to Mom curriculum and has prayed for God's leading and provision for this. We have also been hearing from you, member moms and Titus 2 leaders, about topics you'd like to have addressed in the Mom to Mom curriculum.

The lessons you hold in your hands—and will be seeing and hearing—are an answer to those prayers. It all began with a conversation we had over coffee as we sensed God bringing us together to write and teach a new curriculum addressing these topics. Now we have the joy of sharing it with you. Of course, we feel that all three of the previous Mom to Mom curriculum series have addressed the very real lives of moms. But in this series we offer you additional voices. Theresa teaches out of the challenges she has experienced in her own mom life. We are also delighted to present guest teachers Paul and Virginia Friesen, of Home Improvement Ministries, who bring their own experience and expertise on the challenges of social media; you'll hear from them in session 6. In addition, throughout the *Real Mom Life* video series, you'll get to hear from other moms and a number of different people who work with kids—all of whom add their unique perspectives to the topics we cover.

We hope all of these additions bring a richness and depth to the very real challenges we all face as moms. And, as always at Mom to Mom, we hope that you will hear our hearts. What we want most is to equip you and encourage you on your journey as moms. We know how hard it is. We also know how important it is. And we know how rewarding it can be—long term, and occasionally, even right now where you are, in the trenches. Above all, we know that we do not parent alone. We have each other: moms learning and growing together. And, more importantly, we have our great God. He goes before, comes alongside, and loves our kids even more than we do!

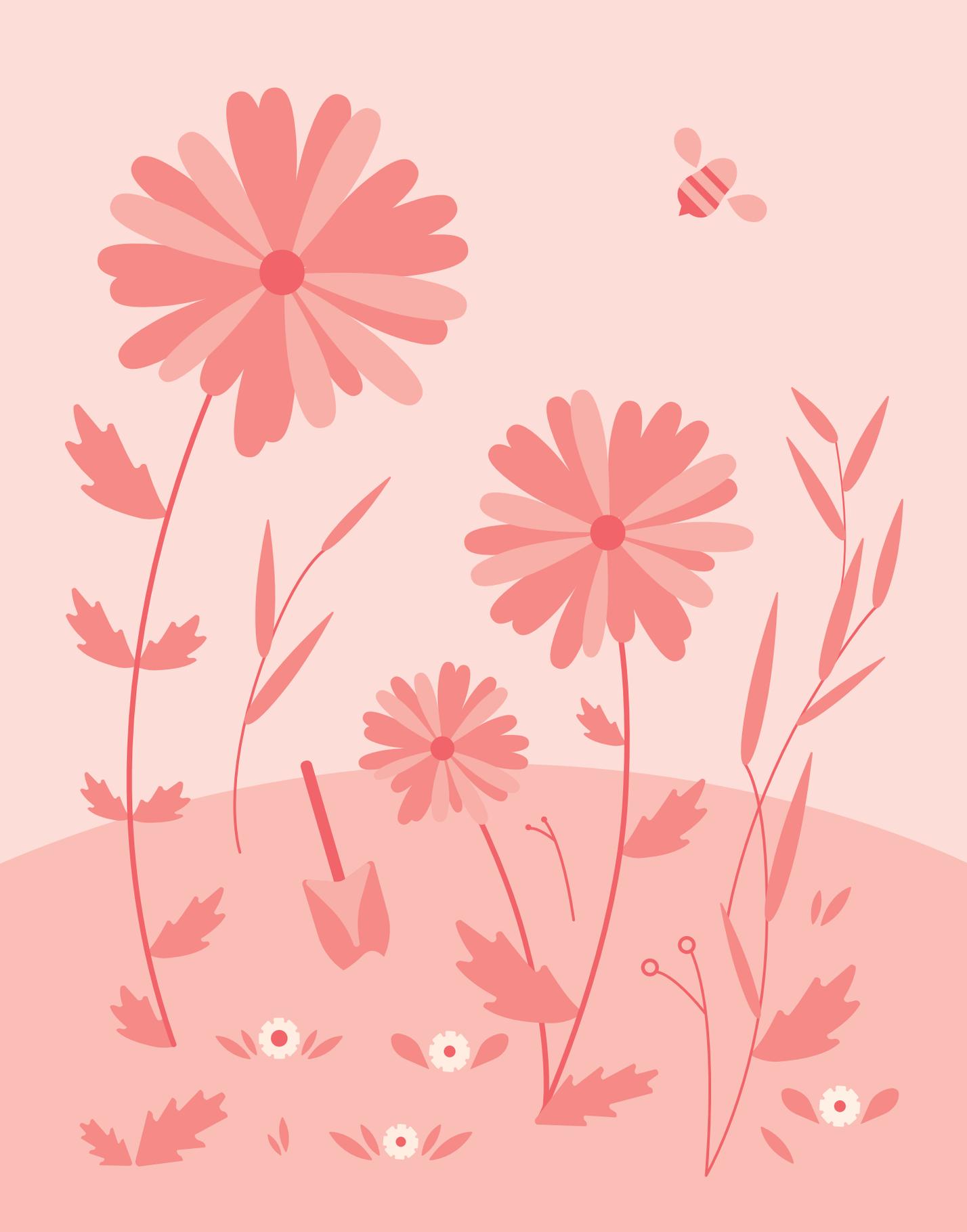
In the end, parenting, like everything else in our lives, is all about grace. God's grace. The grace God extends to us through Jesus Christ, and the grace He calls us to offer our children. We all need to learn what the Apostle Paul did, that *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* (2 Corinthians 12:9)

God's grace to you—



Linda Anderson and Theresa Nelson







# Mom, You Made a Great Choice

with Linda Anderson and Theresa Nelson

**Today's Focus:** Welcome to Mom to Mom! Today we begin our journey together through “Real Mom Life.” In this session we want to affirm two choices you have made—to be a mom and to be here at Mom to Mom. We also get to introduce to you a new teacher and to give you a glimpse of what lies ahead, both in our teaching and in our life-giving small groups. We're glad you've joined us!

## I. Being a mom is the hardest thing you'll ever do.

1. It's 24/7/365.
  - Sleep deprivation and total exhaustion push you beyond your limits.
  - It reveals in you things about yourself you never knew—and may not want to!
2. It's isolating.
  - We can feel lonely, overwhelmed—and bored.
  - We often feel invisible, culturally undervalued, and relationally unappreciated.
  - It can make us a little crazy!
3. Its rewards are not short term.
  - We can feel we're accomplishing nothing—like a hamster running on its wheel.
  - Our “failures” seem immediately apparent; our “successes” register only in the rear-view mirror.
4. No other work you'll ever do will have such a deep emotional grip on your heart.

### So we need to be reminded:

- God is not finished yet—with us, or with our children.

*... he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.* —Philippians 1:6
- We press on, as Paul did (see Philippians 3:12–14).





## II. Being a mom is the best thing you'll ever do.

1. It's just plain fun—at least some of the time.
  - Admit it—those faces are pretty cute (at least when they're sleeping!)
  - They say hilarious things—and keep us entertained!
2. You get to make a huge difference:
  - In their “successes,” cheering them on.
  - In their “failures,” walking alongside them in the tough times.
3. Parenting grows you and builds your character.
  - Sometimes it feels like the ultimate spiritual discipline.
  - In our weakness, we learn much about confession, forgiveness, and grace.  
“Good parenting lives at the intersection of a humble admission of your personal powerlessness and a confident rest in the power and grace of God.”<sup>1</sup>  
—Paul David Tripp
4. Parenting changes you in ways nothing else could.
  - It softens your heart and grows your compassion.
  - It reveals the true Source of your strength.
5. Parenting is an investment that yields long-term benefits.

So . . . laugh a lot and enjoy your kids! (see Luke 1:14 and 3 John 4)

## III. Mom to Mom provides practical and Biblical teaching for our real mom lives.

1. Parenting wisdom from the most important Book—not a formula from a best-selling parenting book.
2. Timeless wisdom from the Bible—even if you have never read the Bible before!
3. Teaching that provides practical “tools for your toolbox.”

Some specific topics we will address in the “Real Mom Life” curriculum:

- Raising teenagers, learning difficulties, infertility, strong-willed children
- Learning to put our trust in God by looking *up* rather than looking *around*

---

1. Paul David Tripp, *Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family*, pp. 69–70.





#### IV. Mom to Mom offers new relationships with other moms.

1. We develop connections and friendships in our small groups.
2. We cheer each other on!
3. We pour hope into each other.
4. Our Titus 2 leaders facilitate small group discussions and offer perspective.

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,  
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.  
—Romans 15:13*





## Discussion Questions

### Mom, You Made a Great Choice

**Report Time:** Introduce yourselves around your small group table. As you describe your families to one another, consider sharing photos of your child(ren) (and your husband, if you are currently married). Also explain why you are participating in Mom to Mom this year. Describe what you are hoping to learn or experience.

1. What does “Real Mom Life” mean to you? Describe your “Real Mom Life” to the other moms at your table.
2. What is your favorite thing about being a mom? What is your favorite time of day with your children?
3. Were you surprised to hear about the parenting wisdom available in the Bible? What parenting lessons would you like to learn from the Bible this year?
4. We heard in today’s session that Mom to Mom reminds us that God is in charge of our children, not us. What do you think of that concept? Is that a freeing thought, or a scary thought?

**For Next Week:** Reflect on today’s lesson and consider what you are most looking forward to in your Mom to Mom experience. How are you hoping to learn and grow as a mom this year?



# Reflections 1

## Mom, You Made a Great Choice

### Give yourself a break! You are not the only one who feels/thinks:

I am always exhausted. This is a nonstop job.  
I feel isolated and lonely—sometimes even bored.  
It feels as if I never accomplish anything.

Who knew another human being could get such a grip on your heart?

### Remind yourself now and then:

How cute your kids are (at least while sleeping). And fun—and funny!  
What you are doing today will affect many tomorrows.  
Your character is being shaped and grown even as you “grow” theirs.  
God’s grace is far greater than your weakness.  
There really are long-term benefits. Ask any grandma.

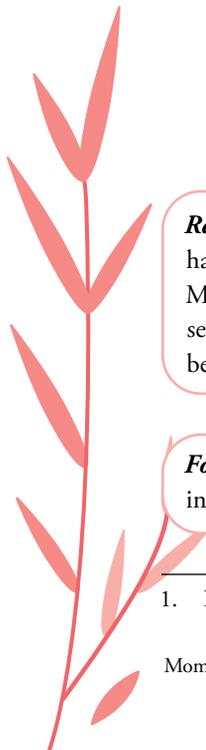
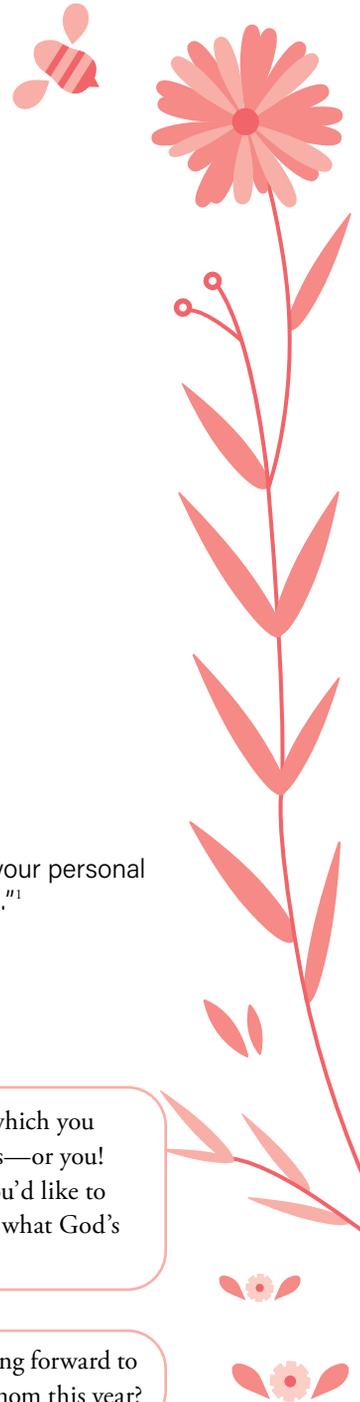
### A quote worth remembering:

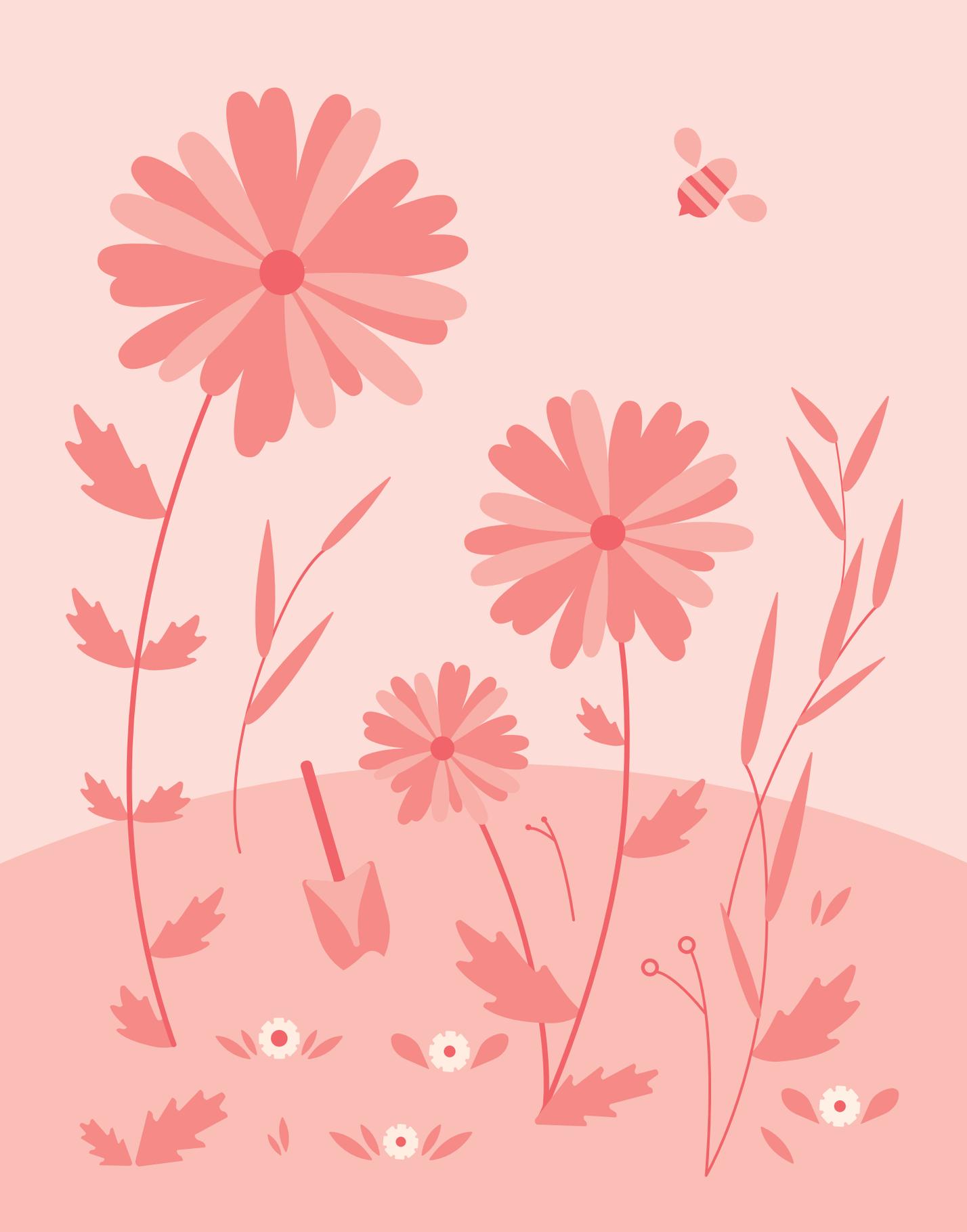
“Good parenting lives at the intersection of a humble admission of your personal powerlessness and a confident rest in the power and grace of God.”<sup>1</sup>

**Read and Grow:** Read Philippians 1:6 and 3:12–14. Reflect on some area in which you have seen or are currently seeing God at work changing and growing your kids—or you! Make a list of some of them, and thank God. Then list a few areas in which you’d like to see growth. Pray about these things. Come back to this list occasionally to see what God’s been up to.

**For Next Week:** Reflect on today’s lesson and consider what you are most looking forward to in your Mom to Mom experience. How are you hoping to learn and grow as a mom this year?

1. Paul David Tripp, *Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family*, pp. 69–70.







# Can You Really Love Your Kids *and* Your Life at the Same Time?

*with Theresa Nelson*

**Today's Focus:** How often do we let the daily drudgery of our mom jobs steal our joy in life? We will examine some of the common attitudes and situations that steal our joy as moms and we'll consider some practical steps that can enable us to love our kids and our life.

## I. What keeps us from loving our life—and sometimes even from loving our kids?

1. Unrealistic expectations steal our joy—unrealistic expectations of:
  - Our husbands
  - Our kids
  - Ourselves!
2. “Mom fog” thinking steals our joy—we can't see beyond today.
  - Sleep deprivation is a major factor.
  - Getting through one day at a time is all we can do.
  - Danger: Being a mom gives you blurred vision.
3. Feelings of failure steal our joy—somehow we just don't measure up.
  - Comparisons—with others, with the past, with our own inner standards
  - Misunderstanding of our mom-role
4. Fear steals our joy. What are we afraid of?
  - Something terrible could happen to them.
  - They may not be happy.
  - They may not turn out the way I think they should.
  - I may do something that messes them up for life.





## II. What can we do? How can we love both our kids *and* our life?

1. Adjust expectations.
  - Get real about your husband, your kids, and your life.
  - Give yourself breaks.
2. Try to get a glimpse of the “big picture.”
  - Let Mom to Mom help you.
  - Remember—or even write it down.
  - Ask: “What would God say to me right now?”

*... take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

—2 Corinthians 10:5b

3. Get a grip on Grace.
  - Straighten out your theology.
  - Remember Who’s in charge here.
  - Exchange guilt for grace. Grace is always available (Book of Galatians).
4. Turn your fears into faith.
  - Remember that He is in charge.
  - Know that He loves your kids more than you do.
  - Turn your worries into prayer (see Philippians 4:6–7, NLT).

*Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”*

—Matthew 11:28–30 (NLT)







4. What helps you get a glimpse of the “bigger picture” of parenting? Of God’s grace?

5. What would you like to learn to trust God with in your life?

**For Next Week:** Think about one thing that steals your joy in life. What steps can you take this week to begin to address that situation? Can you ask your spouse, mentor, or friend for help or perspective?



## Reflections 2

# Can You Really Love Your Kids *and* Your Life at the Same Time?

### Ask yourself:

What unrealistic expectations (of yourself or others) are stealing your joy?

In what ways is “mom fog” obscuring your vision of your life as a mom?

What comparisons do you frequently make with others (in real life or on social media) that contribute to your “I feel like a failure” feelings?

What fears tend to dominate your thoughts as a mom?

### Remind yourself:

You are not called to be SuperMom. And your kids don't need SuperMom. They need *you*—to love them, laugh with them, and learn along with them.

Your kids are not SuperKids. They are real kids. And, as Ross Campbell reminds us, they will tend to act like real kids.

This season will not be forever, though it may seem to be. It is lived one day at a time. And what you are able to do today will be enough.

God's grace is far greater than our greatest weaknesses and deepest failures. Don't be harder on yourself than God is.

Take all your worries and fears to God. Remember, He loves your kids more than you do!

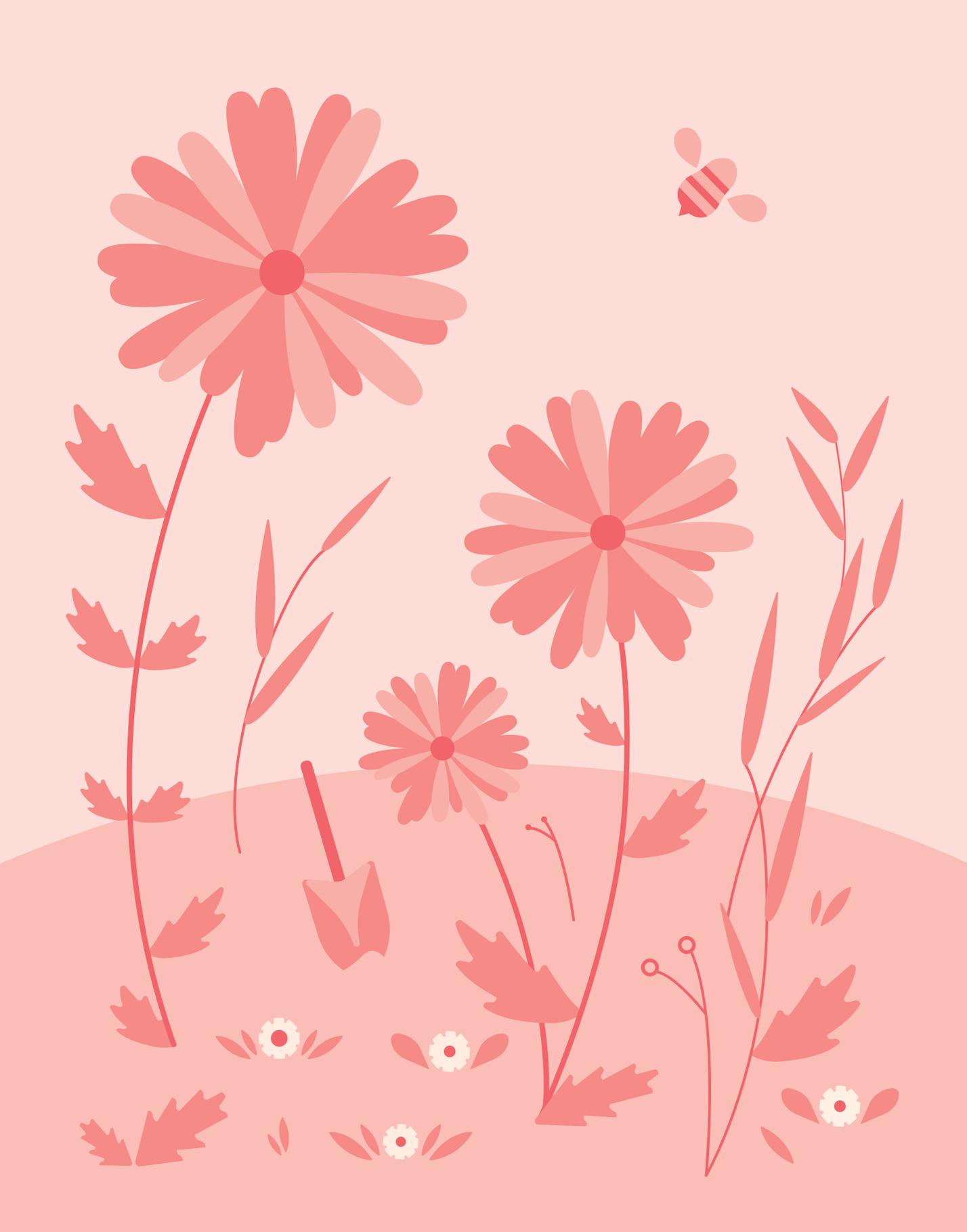
**Read and Grow:** Turn your worries into prayers. Here's a practical way to begin doing this: Read over Philippians 4:6–7:

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Make a list of some of your greatest worries and fears. Then form each of those concerns into a one-sentence prayer—verbally, or on paper, or in a journal. Each time that same fear comes to mind, turn it into a quick prayer—even a word—to remind you to give it over to God. Be encouraged by the last sentence of the above passage as found in “The Message” paraphrase:

*It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.*

**For Next Week:** Think about one thing that steals your joy in life. What steps can you take this week to begin to address that situation? Can you ask your spouse, mentor or friend for help or perspective?





# Ages and Stages: A Party Planner's Guide to Phases of Family Life

*with Theresa Nelson*

**Today's Focus:** In today's session, we will examine the ages and stages of family life, considering the privileges and responsibilities kids may be ready to take on in each stage. We will notice the similarities to the stages in planning and hosting a party. So, let's get this party started!

The ages and stages of family life are similar to the stages of planning and hosting a party:

1. Infant/toddler/preschool: Party planning and prep work
2. Elementary school aged: Guests arrive with polite conversation
3. Teenage years: Rowdy and rambunctious!
4. Young adult years: Cleanup and reminiscing

## I. Stage One: Infant/toddler/preschool

*"Party Planning and Prep Work"*

Characterized by busyness! Lots of exhausting, physically taxing work!  
Thoughtful effort at this stage pays off in the long run.

1. Positives:
  - Snuggly, cuddly stage
  - So much excitement about "firsts" and milestones
  - Joy of the "little things"
2. Responsibilities:
  - Learning to go to sleep when tired!
  - Picking up toys and books
3. Privileges:
  - Having a say in family meals
  - Choosing outfits each day
  - Extra bedtime story for good behavior





## II. Stage Two: Elementary school aged children

*“Guests Arrive with Polite Conversation”*

Child is more physically independent, but still emotionally dependent.

### 1. Positives:

- Child can get dressed, brush teeth, use the bathroom.
- Most children are helpful and eager to please—at least much of the time.
- Child will accept your worldview and respect your boundaries.
- Child is learning new things at school and after school activities.
- Often a fun companion

### 2. Responsibilities:

- Assistance with family meals
- Yardwork
- Household cleaning
- Keeping room clean

### 3. Privileges:

- Choosing after-school activities
- Later bedtime than younger siblings
- Extra bedtime stories for good behavior and achievements





### III. Stage Three: Teenage years

*"Rowdy and Rambunctious!"*

The teenage years can be messy—and produce some fireworks!

Physical and hormonal changes. They may feel ugly and worthless. They become self-absorbed.

Teenagers need to individuate and establish identity separate from you. They desire privacy and identify with peers.

They may alienate and abandon younger siblings.

They may push back and challenge your authority and worldview.

Can be a challenging time in marriage if the two of you disagree on how to handle.

#### 1. Positives:

- Time of discovery and “becoming”
- Figuring out who they want to become and identifying skills they want to develop
- The struggle is an important part of growing up and becoming independent. You would be worried about a child who did *not* go through this necessary phase!
- They are startled and confused by all the changes, too! They need your support and encouragement. “You are *beautiful*,” and “I like your friends—you can have them over anytime.”

#### 2. Responsibilities:

- Taking care of their own laundry
- Part-time job to contribute to clothing and entertainment allowance
- Cutting the grass or shoveling snow
- Adhering to curfew when out at night

#### 3. Privileges:

- Having a cell phone  
 [www.waituntil8th.org](http://www.waituntil8th.org)
- Going to the mall or movies with friends
- Including friends on family outings and trips
- Access to the family car





## IV. Stage Four: Young adult years

### “Cleanup and Reminiscing”

When your children are ready to leave the home, your job is not entirely done!  
But you have the time to look back on fond memories.

1. Positives:
  - Quality time with your spouse
  - Time to pursue hobbies/career
  - Transition to the role of “wise counselor” with your children
  - Opportunity to watch your adult children forge ahead in life!
  
2. Responsibilities:
  - Managing their budget/finances
  - Ownership of personal decision-making (legal/medical)
  
3. Privileges:
  - Participation in family vacation
  - Funds for their own travel plans
  - Continued health insurance coverage

Know that what you are doing right now *matters*.  
You are planning and preparing for the party of a lifetime!







## Reflections 3

# Ages and Stages: A Party Planner's Guide to Phases of Family Life

Each age and stage of parenting brings its own joys and challenges. Things worth remembering:

### Infant/Toddler/Preschooler:

Remember to savor those cuddles, “firsts,” and the joy of small things.

Ask yourself: Am I giving them age-appropriate ways to “help” which will form good habits for the future?

### Elementary Stage:

Make the most of their growing ability to do things for themselves. It gives you a break—and grows them.

But watch for the ways they may need you more than ever in different ways—emotionally, socially, and academically.

### Teenage Years:

Respect their need to individuate, but remember they still need a mom (not another best friend)!

Look for ways to pour encouragement and affirmation into them at this stage when they need it most but might appear at times to resist it.

### Young Adult Years:

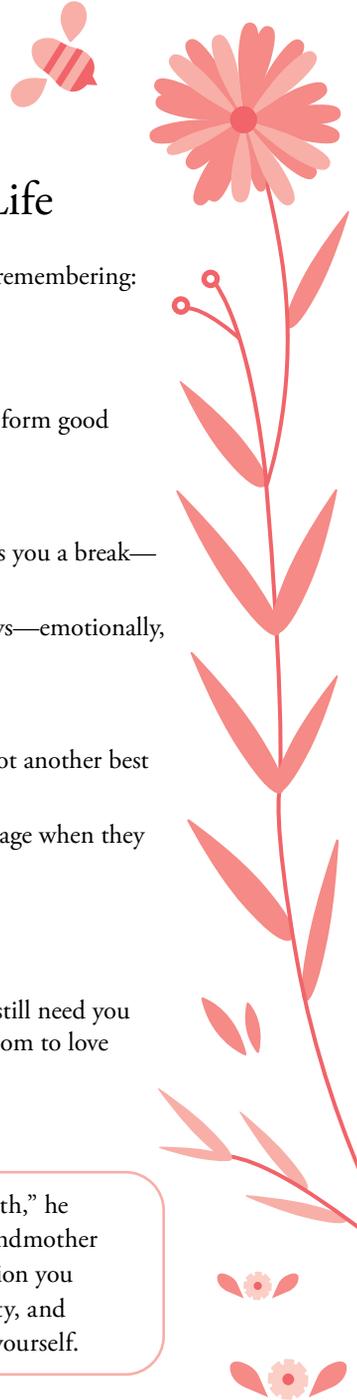
These years may be different from what you expected.

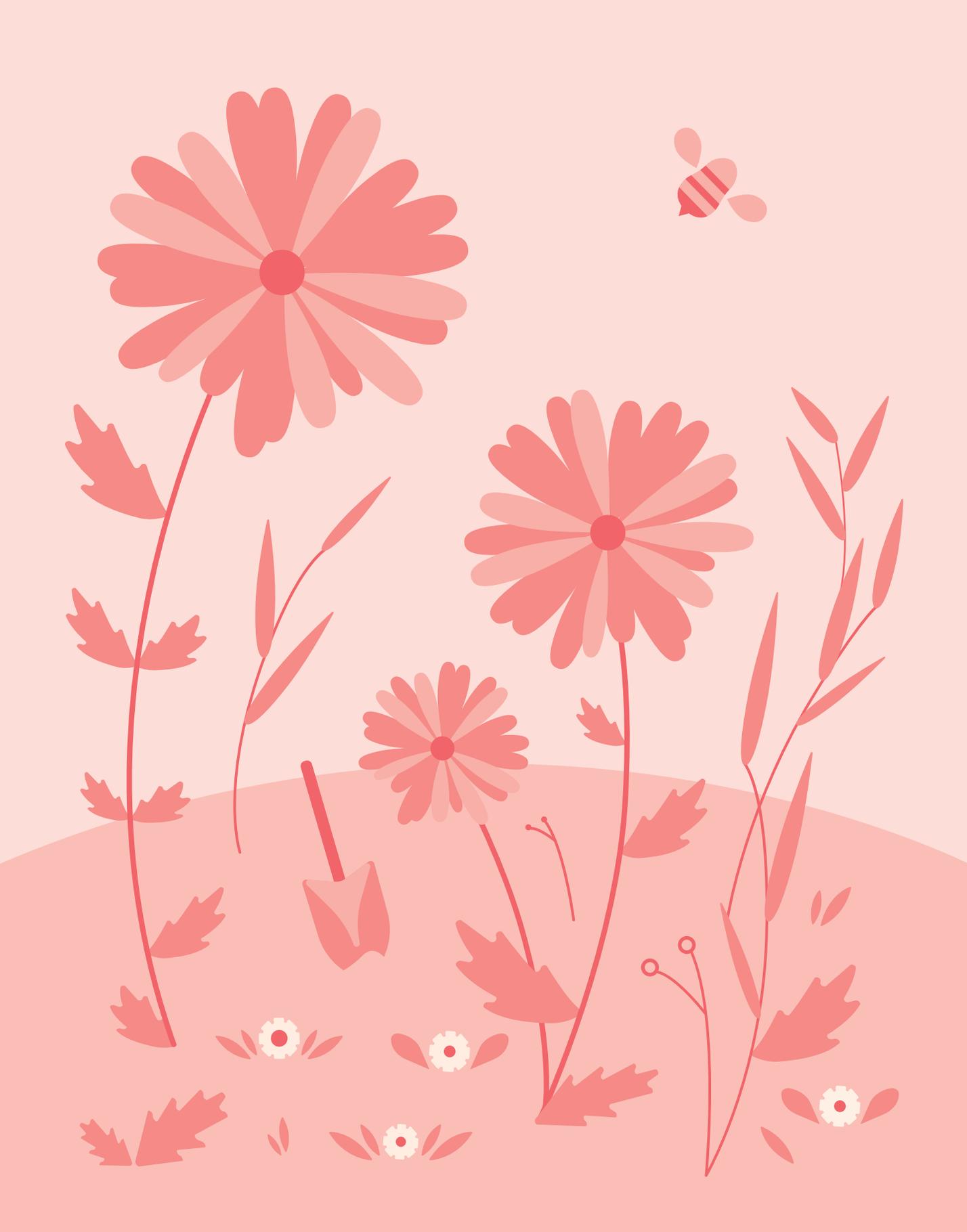
A delicate balancing act may be required between the ways in which they still need you and the adult responsibilities they should be learning. Pray for Godly wisdom to love them well at this stage.

**At all stages, remember: What you are doing right now *matters!***

**Read and Grow:** When the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, his “son in the faith,” he reminded Timothy of the spiritual foundation that his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois built in him. Read 2 Timothy 1:5 and 3:14–15 and reflect on the foundation you have given, are giving, or want to give your children. Pray for wisdom, creativity, and perseverance in building this foundation in whatever stage you currently find yourself.

**For Next Week:** Think about the next stage you will enter in family life. What are you looking forward to the most? What steps can you take to prepare yourself and your children for that next step?





# Don't Give In to the Extremes

with Theresa Nelson

**Today's Focus:** We all have unique personalities and strengths that express themselves in our parenting styles. We can sometimes go overboard with a parenting strength such that it becomes a liability in our homes. We will consider ways to find a happy medium in our parenting styles, so that we don't "give in to the extremes."

## I. Aim for a happy medium in parenting, rather than moment-by-moment perfection.

### Positive Parenting Style Extremes

Strict Discipline	Fun Loving
Neat and Tidy	Celebratory Chaos
Super Nutritious	Junk Food Junkie
Super Scheduler	Nothing but "Free Time"
Play It Safe	Go for Adventure

1. Parenting strengths taken to an extreme can become a liability.

"Unguarded strength is actually a double weakness."<sup>1</sup> —Oswald Chambers

*"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."  
Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's  
power may rest on me.* —2 Corinthians 12:9

*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the  
heavens . . .* —Ecclesiastes 3:1

2. Don't take yourself too seriously!

1. Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest* (Discovery House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1992), April 19.



## II. Look for opportunities to “break the rules” on your extreme issues.

So, ask yourself . . .

1. “What is the big picture here?”
2. “What do I want my kids to remember?”
3. “Am I missing the child in front of me because I am too busy pursuing perfection in one particular area?”
4. “What aspects of my ‘strengths’ are potential liabilities in our home?”

## III. Look for partners to help you balance yourself and find a happy medium.

“I wish for a power to give us this gift: Being able to see ourselves the way other people see us.”<sup>2</sup> —Robert Burns

Ask a trusted friend or mentor to help you examine any “extremes” in your parenting style.

---

2. [https://simple.wikiquote.org/wiki/Robert\\_Burns](https://simple.wikiquote.org/wiki/Robert_Burns), accessed 9/2/2022.





4. Do you see your children inheriting your “extreme” issues, or rebelling against them?



5. Describe a characteristic you admire in another parent you know.

6. What is a step can you take to “break the rules” on one of your extreme parenting styles?

**For Next Week:** Think about one area in your mom life where you might “give in to the extremes.” Is there someone who could offer perspective or balance in this aspect of your parenting?



## Reflections 4

### Don't Give In to the Extremes

Consider which of the following descriptors of parenting styles best describe you:

Strict Discipline	Fun Loving
Neat and Tidy	Celebratory Chaos
Super-Nutritious	Junk Food Junkie
Super Scheduler	Free Time Only
Play It Safe	Go for Adventure

In which areas might you be vulnerable to going to extremes?

What challenges might you be able to give yourself to become a bit more flexible in your vulnerable areas?

**Good questions to ask yourself:**

What is the “big picture” here? How might I be missing it?

What do I want my kids to remember? (E.g., super clean floors or fun times we had together?)

Am I missing the child right in front of me because I am too busy pursuing perfection in some area?

What aspects of my “strengths” are potential liabilities in our home?

**Remember the wisdom of Ecclesiastes:**

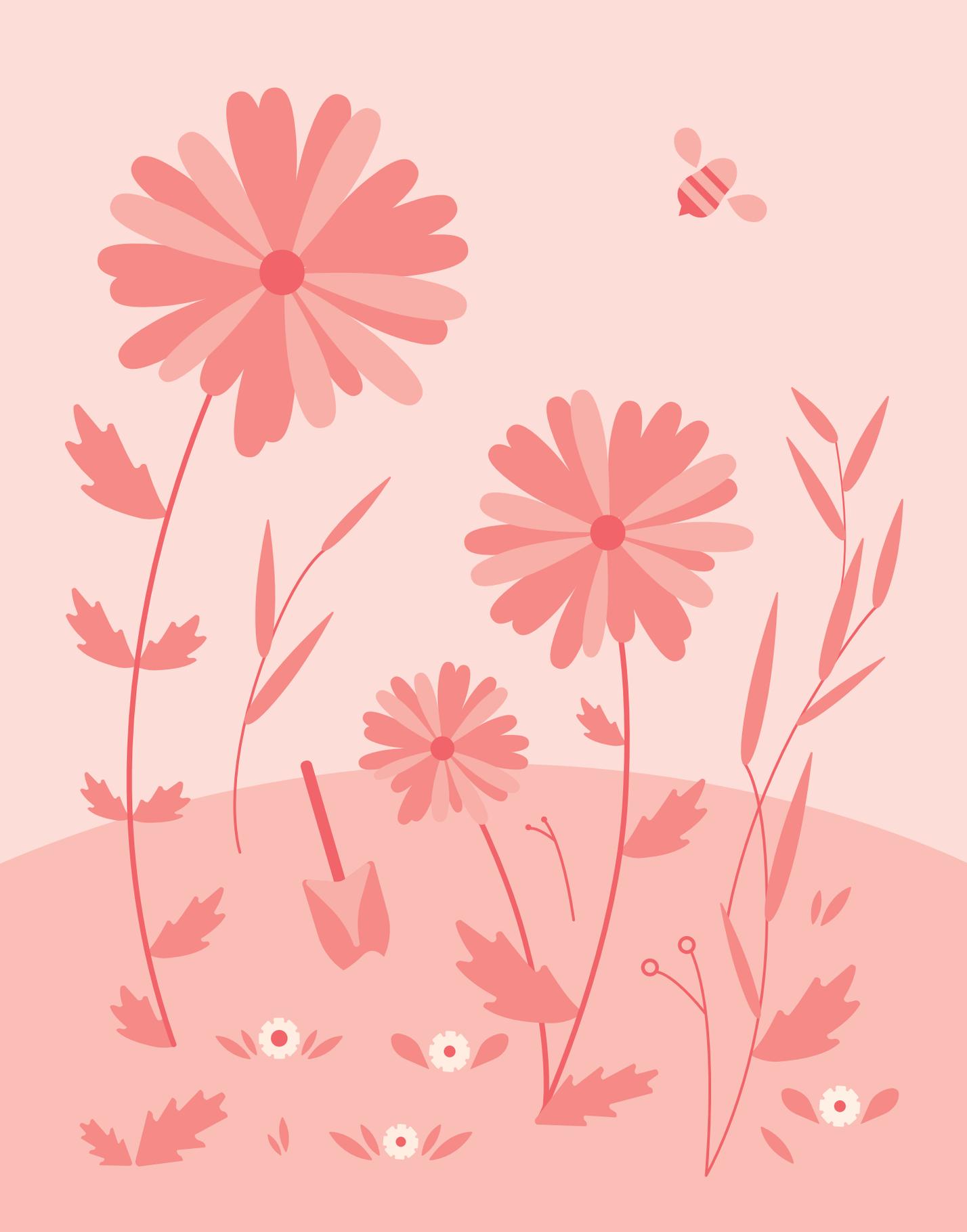
*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.*

—Ecclesiastes 3:1

**Read and Grow:** As we seek wisdom in balancing our “mom lives,” it is encouraging to remember that God knows us even better than we know ourselves, and He will always give wisdom as we ask (see James 1:5). We can draw on His power in our weaknesses, and His strength when ours gives out. Read the following verse and consider how it might apply in your own mom-life:

*But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”*  
—2 Corinthians 12:9a

**For Next Week:** Think about one area in your mom life where you might “give in to the extremes.” Is there someone who could offer perspective or balance in this aspect of your parenting?



# Allowing Kids to Fail: A Crucial Part of the Learning Process

with Theresa Nelson

**Today's Focus:** We strive to protect our children from failure but that deprives them of the opportunity to learn valuable life lessons. We will examine ways to allow our kids to learn from everyday failures and disappointments in life.

"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time."  
—Thomas Alva Edison, inventor of the light bulb

"Growing up, my dad used to encourage my brother and me to fail. I didn't realize it at the time, but he was just redefining failure for me. Failure became about not trying, not the outcome."<sup>1</sup>  
—Sara Blakely, founder of SPANX, Inc.

## I. Have a “growth mindset” rather than a “fixed mindset.”

1. Carol Dweck, in her book, *Mindset*, teaches us about the “growth” mindset<sup>2</sup>:

FIXED MINDSET	GROWTH MINDSET
Goal is success	Goal is growth/learning
Avoids “hard” tasks	Welcomes a challenge
Focus on natural born talents	Focus on hard work
“I am a failure”	“I failed”

2. Jim Marshall of the Minnesota Vikings scored a touchdown for the wrong team!<sup>3</sup>
3. We parents must be aware of our own inclinations:
  - Do we expect our kids to perform in areas where we excel?
  - Or to make up for areas in which we have shortcomings?
  - Are we afraid of *their* failure or *our* failure?

1. Quoted in a CNN/Money article: <https://money.cnn.com/2018/04/02/news/companies/sara-blakely-rebound/index.html>

2. Carol Dweck, Ph.D., *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (Ballantine Books, Penguin Random House, New York, NY, 2016).

3. Steve Young, *Great Failures of the Extremely Successful* (Tallfellow Press, Los Angeles, CA, 2002) pp. 7–10.



4. A great TED talk: “How to Raise Successful Kids—without Overparenting” by Julie Lythcott-Haims, Dean of Freshman at Stanford University<sup>4</sup>
5. Children are not bonsai trees to be pruned and shaped into some standard of perfection; they are wildflowers.

## II. Ways to allow your children to fail

1. Realize there are natural bumps and bruises in toddler life.

“A child who has not been bandaged has not been well parented.”

—Dr. Benjamin Spock

2. Encourage kids to try new activities—and stick with them!
3. Hold back from interceding with teachers and coaches.
4. Refrain from doing for your kids what they can do themselves.
5. Do not rescue kids from their mistakes.

## III. Practical tips for building a *growth mindset* in our kids

1. Praise effort, not outcome.
2. Have healthy discussions about failures and disappointments at the dinner table or at bedtime (high/low discussions). Some questions to ask<sup>5</sup>:
  - “What did you learn today?”
  - “What mistake did you make that taught you something?”
  - “What did you work hard at today?”

---

4. [https://www.ted.com/talks/julie\\_lythcott\\_haims\\_how\\_to\\_raise\\_successful\\_kids\\_without\\_over\\_parenting](https://www.ted.com/talks/julie_lythcott_haims_how_to_raise_successful_kids_without_over_parenting)

5. Carol Dweck, Ph.D., *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (Ballantine Books, Penguin Random House, New York, NY, 2016), p. 245.





3. Play the “What if?” game:
  - “What if you do fail the test?”
  - “What if you don’t win the race?”
  - “What if you are not the best artist in class?”
4. Read storybooks about effort and failure:
  -  *The Little Engine That Could* by Watty Piper
  -  *A Whistle for Willie* by Ezra Jack Keats
  -  *Rosie Revere, Engineer* by Andrea Beaty
  -  *Ish* by Peter Reynolds
  -  *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes
5. Share your own stories about failure with your children.
6. Remember to talk to your kids about *grace*.

#### IV. The ultimate story of growth resulting from “failure”

Jesus’ life ended in apparent “failure”—which became our greatest *victory*.

“We can stand before a perfectly holy God, broken, weak, and failing, and be completely unafraid because we stand before him in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. You no longer have to hope and pray that someday you will measure up, because Jesus has measured up on your behalf.”<sup>6</sup>

---

6. Paul David Tripp, *New Morning Mercies*, January 30.





## Discussion Questions

### Allowing Kids to Fail: A Crucial Part of the Learning Process

**Report Time:** In the last session, we talked about parenting strengths that can become liabilities when taken to an extreme. Did you consider any “extremes” in your parenting style? Have you made any changes or adjustments that you would like to share with your group?

1. Can you see “failures” in your past that were really growth opportunities for learning?
2. How do you react when your children “fail”?
3. What are the areas in which you expect perfection and fear failure most for your children? Academics, athletics, music/art, spiritual devotion? Other areas of performance that are potentially problematic in your family?
4. Do you tend to have a fixed mindset or a growth mindset? How about your kids?
5. Do you agree with Carol Dweck’s fixed/growth mindset hypothesis?
6. How can you help your child(ren) accept failure and learn from mistakes?
7. How does the concept of grace affect your point of view about failure?

**For Next Week:** Think about one area in life where you can allow your child to “fail” and learn from mistakes.



## Reflections 5

### Allowing Kids to Fail: A Crucial Part of the Learning Process

#### Reflect on your own personal/parental inclinations:

Do you lean toward a “fixed mindset” or a “growth mindset”?

Do you tend to view failures as the end of something (just might as well give up on this) or the beginning of something (an opportunity for learning and growth)?

Whose failures do you fear most—yours or theirs?

#### How are you doing on “allowing your kids to fail”?

Encouraging them to try new things?

Controlling your impulses to intercede unnecessarily with teachers and coaches?

Stopping yourself from doing for your kids what they can do for themselves?

Not “rescuing” your kids from their every mistake?

#### Reminders on building a “growth mindset”:

Praise effort more than outcome.

Encourage “high/low” family discussions.

Try the “what if” game with your kids.

Share stories of effort and failure—both children’s books and your own experiences.

Emphasize God’s grace always—for you and for them.

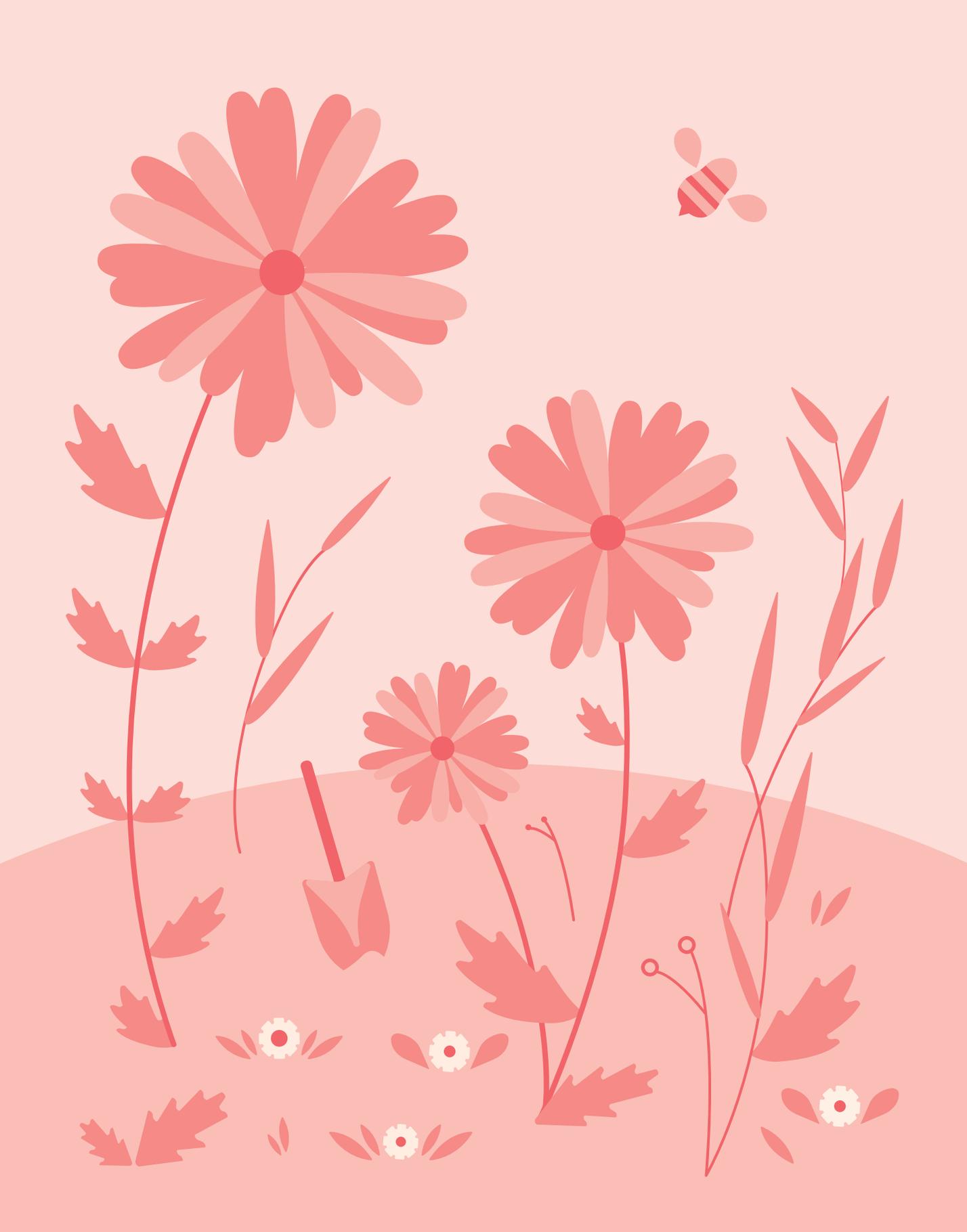
**Read and Grow:** Jesus provides us with a powerful example of allowing failure yet predicting future success in His relationship with the Apostle Peter. During His last meal with His disciples (the “Last Supper”), Jesus says this to Peter:

*“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”*

—Luke 22:31–32

Note Jesus’ prediction, implied knowledge of Peter’s future failure, and prayers. Then note that Jesus not only predicts Peter’s eventual “turning back,” He also calls Peter to future leadership among his “brothers.” What can we learn from this example about our attitudes and perspective toward our children’s failures—and our own?

**For Next Week:** Think about one area in life where you can allow your child to “fail” and learn from mistakes.



# Screen Time: Using Media to Build Rather than Detract

with Drs. Paul and Virginia Friesen

**Today's Focus:** Screens are a part of our everyday lives, like it or not. So, let's think about how to use screen time to enhance family life rather than detract from it. We welcome Drs. Paul and Virginia Friesen to Mom to Mom today, as they help us to examine ways to model appropriate use of tech devices, as well as offer ideas for setting limits on screen time.

Our goal: To create an atmosphere most conducive to the healthy emotional and spiritual development of our children.

Our culture: Overexposed and underdeveloped children.

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

—Romans 12:2 (ESV)

How can we protect the minds of our children from being conformed to this world, and help them instead to discern God's best for them? Let's use an acronym:

**M**odel  
**E**nforce  
**D**iscern  
**I**nvolve  
**A**ccess

## I. Model

*What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

—Philippians 4:9 (ESV)

*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.*

—Ephesians 5:1 (ESV)

1. Time on devices
2. Distraction of devices

## II. Enforce

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

—Ephesians 6:1 (ESV)

1. You determine the limits of media.
2. Don't give in to tantrums. You are the parent!



### III. Discern

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.* —Philippians 4:8 (ESV)

1. Know the content of media.
2. Are the values ones you embrace?

### IV. Involve

*“When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation.”* —Matthew 12:43–45 (ESV)

1. Have creative alternatives to media.
2. If media is off, you are likely on.

### V. Access

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.* —James 1:5 (ESV)

1. Use media for beneficial purposes.
2. Use media for beneficial times.

### VI. Final thoughts

1. The importance of parental agreement:
  - Better to have enforced agreement than to have your way.
  - Stand on moral issues, not simply preferences.





2. How to deal with early exposure:
  - React: “Thanks for telling me.”
  - Request: “What exactly did you see?”
  - Review: “So this is what you saw . . .”
  - Respond: “That is why God gave us clothes . . .”
  - Repeat: “That was good you told me. Always come to me with questions.”
3. The importance of embracing God’s grace in our parenting:
  - It’s never too late to do the right thing.
  - God’s grace is able to fill in the cracks of our human parenting.

*But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so Christ’s power may rest on me. —2 Corinthians 12:9 (ESV)*

## VII. Sobering statistics<sup>1</sup>

1. A 2017 *New York Times* study shows teens and adults check their smart phones at least 150 times per day and text at least 110 times per day. This does not even include Instagram, Snapchat, or other messaging options.
2. A study in the *Journal of Pediatrics* says the average eight-year-old child spends eight hours a day on media.
3. In 2011, 1% of kids 8 and under had tablets. In 2017, 42% do.
4. 72% of children say they have been cyber-bullied because of their looks.
5. Only 1 in 10 kids report bullying to their parents.
6. More than 58% of children surveyed (ages 14–17) report having seen a pornographic site on the Internet or on their phone.
7. More than 2/3 of children in the United States have television sets in their bedrooms.
8. 75% of American households with more than one child have video game equipment.

## VIII. Additional Resources

 *The Tech-Wise Family*, by Andy Crouch

---

1. Parents Television Council, [www.parentstv.org/research-publications](http://www.parentstv.org/research-publications), accessed 9/2/2022.





## Discussion Questions

### Screen Time: Using Media to Build Rather than Detract

**Report Time:** Last week, we discussed ways we can allow our kids to experience failure and disappointment in life, so they can learn valuable life lessons. Did you have a moment to think about an area where you can allow your child to “fail” and learn? Can you share with your group about any lessons you learned from the experience?

1. What areas of media cause you the most concern for your children?
2. Of the five areas in the outline, which are the most challenging for you?
3. What has been helpful to you in making media decisions in your family?
4. What tech tools and apps have been helpful in your household?
5. Describe some of the ways you get involved with your kids when screens are off. How do you engage your children at restaurants, the grocery store, the dinner table, etc., without turning to electronic devices?
6. How have you used media in beneficial ways in your family?

**For Next Week:** Take a moment to reflect on the use of media and electronic devices in your household. Think about one change you would like to make in that area—either one way you would like to use media to enhance your home life, or one way you would like to limit media and its potential to detract from your family relationships.



## Reflections 6

### Screen Time: Using Media to Build Rather than Detract

#### Ask yourself:

- What media habits do your children see modeled in you?
- How well are you enforcing screen time habits in your household?
- How much do you know about the screen content to which your kids are exposed?
- What alternatives to screen time are you offering your children?
- How can you plan to access media at appropriate times and in more positive ways?

#### For your encouragement, remember:

You have the opportunity to model good media habits for your kids. Teaching by example is a powerful parenting tool.

God has given you the responsibility to “be the parent here” in this area, as in many others. When He calls you to a task, He gives you the strength to do it. Look back at your lesson and reflect on 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Cutting back on media can actually open up increased opportunities for meaningful interaction with your kids. Examples: car conversations, sharing a hike, nature exploration in your own back yard.

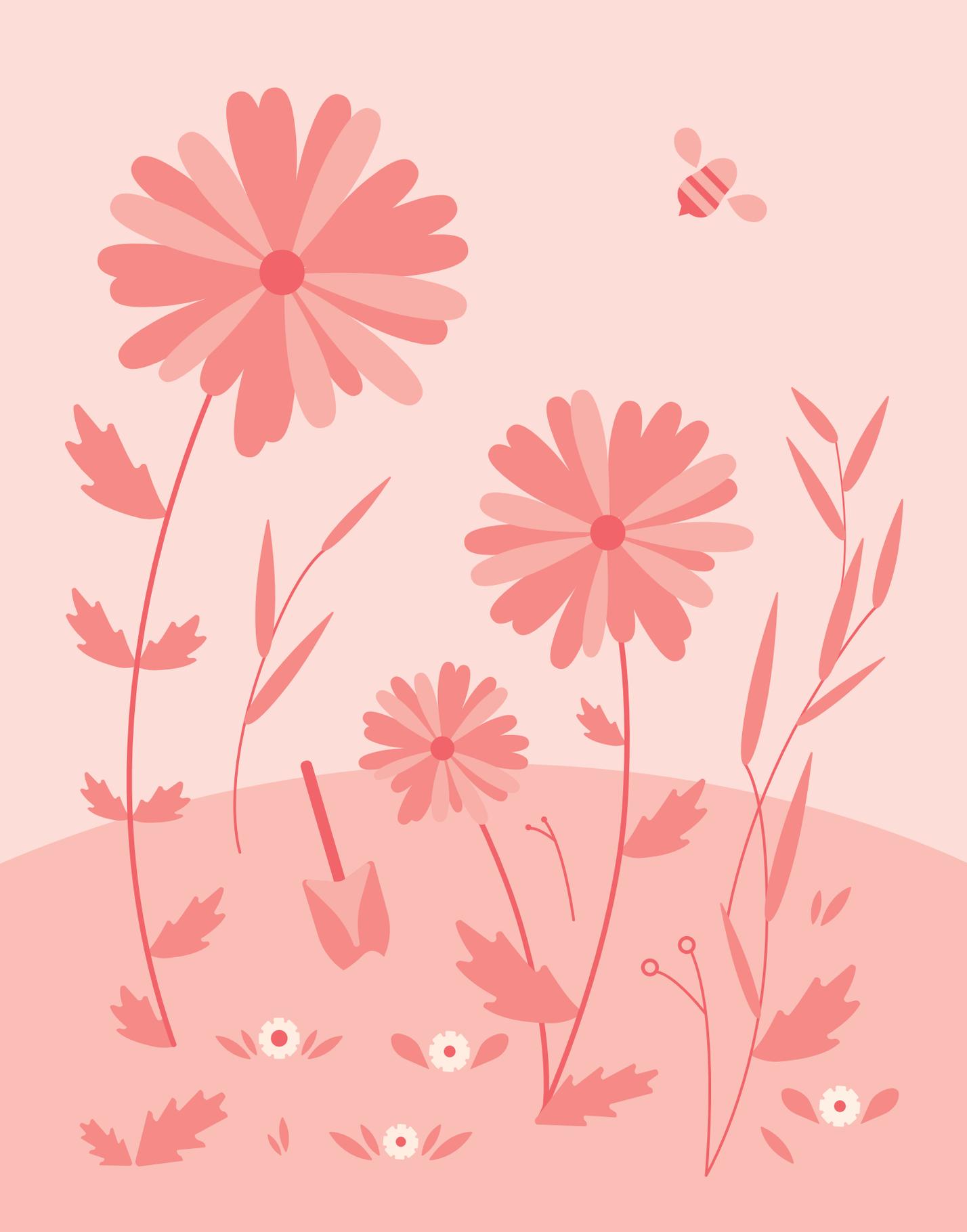
It’s never too late to start making media work for your family life, not against it.

#### **Read and Grow:** Read Deuteronomy 6:4–9.

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*

In Mom to Mom, we often refer to this passage as “the Deuteronomy 6 lifestyle.” These words from God were originally spoken by Moses to God’s people, the Israelites, but there is much deep Godly wisdom here for our lives today. How might our current media-saturated culture work against the relationship-building suggested here? Are there ways in which your family’s current media habits might impede a “Deuteronomy 6 lifestyle”? What changes might you want to make so you don’t miss these opportunities?

**For Next Week:** Take a moment to reflect on the use of media and electronic devices in your household. Think about one change you would like to make in that area—either one way you would like to use media to enhance your home life, or one way you would like to limit media and its potential to detract from your family relationships.





# Partnering with “Grandma,” “Nana,” and “Gigi”

with Linda Anderson and Theresa Nelson

**Today’s Focus:** Extended family: Sometimes you can’t live with ‘em, and you can’t live without ‘em. Today we will discuss both the joys and the challenges of sharing your kids with grandparents. We will talk about empathy and expectations as we seek to improve our communication and develop acceptable compromise. After all, don’t we all basically want the same thing? We yearn for meaningful intergenerational relationships and traditions with extended family.

## I. From the inside: two words that make all the difference

1. *Empathy* (the ability to understand and share the feelings of another)
  - When conflicts arise, ask yourself, “Is this battle really worth fighting?”
  - Have you thought about what it is like to be your mother or mother-in-law?
    - When is the last time you thanked them for what they contribute?
    - Act in a loving way and the loving feelings may then follow.
  - Remember, it is all about grace!
2. *Expectations*
  - You may not be aware of the expectations you have of extended family until those expectations are not being met.
  - Begin with a conversation.

*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

—Romans 12:18

## II. How *communication* and *compromise* can impact two common areas of conflict

1. Parenting and discipline
  - *Mother-in-law Viewpoint:* Understanding of roles and boundaries is crucial: “I’m not the parent here! I get the fun part.”
  - *Daughter-in-law Viewpoint:* Make grandparents feel valued and included while setting boundaries around roles.





- Again, begin with a conversation.
- Play to the strengths your parents or in-laws have.
- “We’re working on it” can be a polite way to tactfully end the conversation.

## 2. Holidays and celebrations

- *Mother-in-law Viewpoint:* As much as I love having all my family together in our home, I place the highest priority on the nuclear family. We try to be flexible in how, where, and when celebrations happen.
- *Daughter-in-law Viewpoint:* I want my kids to appreciate family traditions and extended time with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins while seeking to establish our own new family traditions.
- Have a conversation about hopes for the holiday season early in the year.
- Managing gift overload can be a challenge, especially if extended family has the love language of “gifts.”
- “Make hay while the sun shines” and enjoy grandparents while they are healthy and mobile.

## III. Conclusion

Healthy, meaningful extended family relationships can be a great gift to all of us. These relationships are worth the effort to increase our empathy, evaluate our expectations, improve our communication, and be willing to compromise.







## Reflections 7

### Partnering with “Grandma,” “Nana,” and “Gigi”

Reflecting on *empathy, expectations, communication, and compromise*—ask yourself:

Have you ever thought about what it’s like to be your mother-in-law? Ever considered things from her point of view?

What unspoken expectations do you think you may have about your extended family life? What expectations might other family members have?

What conversations might you and your family need to have?

Compromise can feel impossible sometimes, but are there areas of your extended family life in which you might actually need to “bend” a bit more?

Thinking again on those four words—*empathy, expectations, communication, and compromise*—consider any constructive action you might be able to take, such as:

Reach out to thank your mother-in-law for something she has done for you, for something you have learned from her, or maybe for raising your husband!

Initiate (prayerfully) a grace-filled conversation about what expectations various family members might have for holiday celebrations.

Think carefully about issues that are truly worth “going to the wall for” and which ones you might just let go. Try letting those go, and pray about how to handle the others.

Think about how you could constructively discuss conflict-producing issues surrounding boundaries, roles, and discipline. Use “I statements” instead of “you accusations,” or reply with a polite “We’re working on it.”

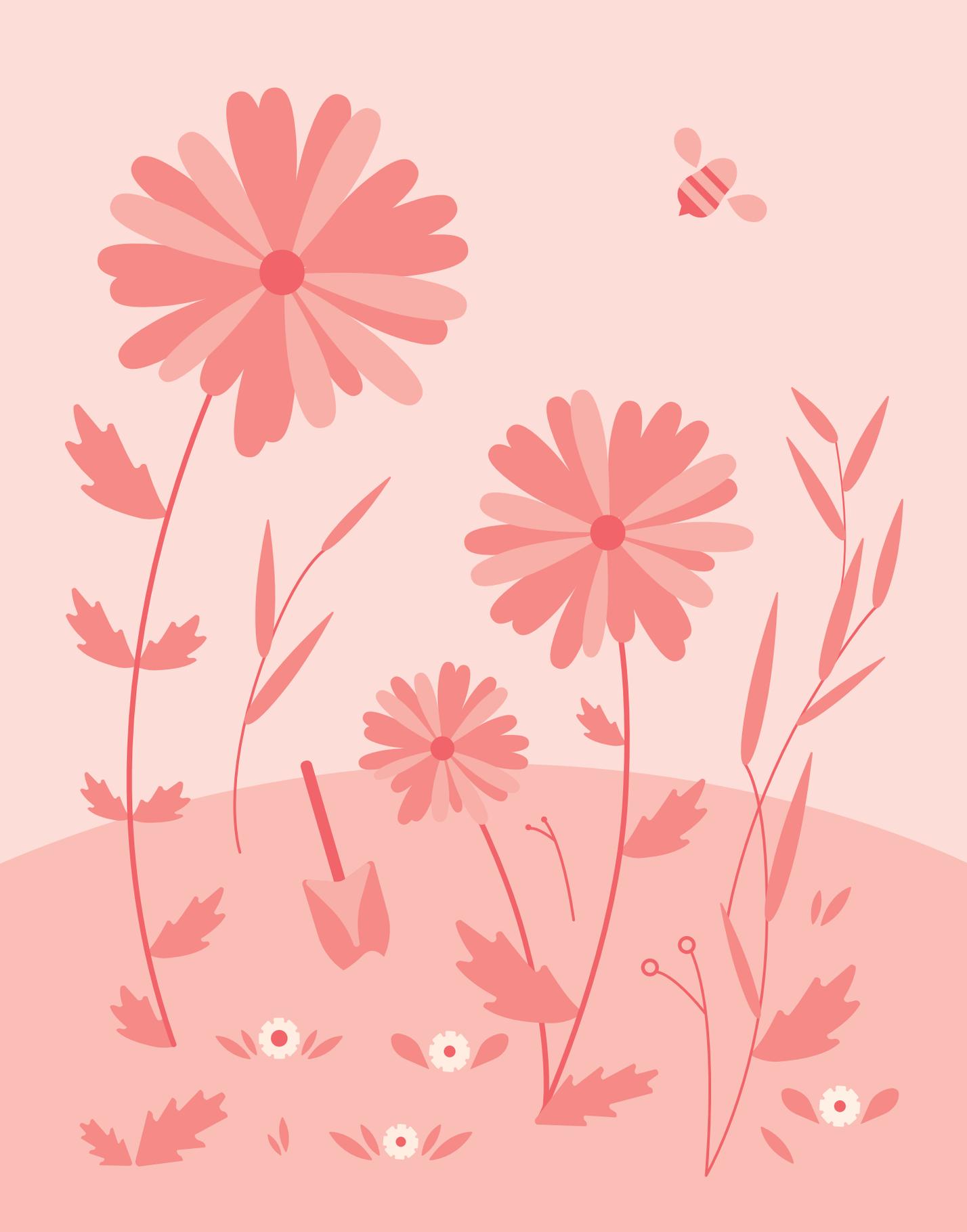
Identify an area in which you need to give more grace. Then extend that grace!

**Read and Grow:** Reflect on Romans 12:18:

*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

Note how realistic these words are. *If it is possible:* some situations feel nearly impossible; there are times when you’ve done all you can, and what’s left is prayer, which is always possible. *As far as it depends on you:* the only person you truly have power to change is you; give yourself grace when you’ve done all you can. Ask God: Is there anything more I can do to promote peace? Then do what you can, and leave the rest to God.

**For Next Week:** Think about one step you can take to improve your relationship with extended family this week. (Maybe you can write a letter, make a phone call, send a text, schedule a coffee date, or send a card.) Be ready to share with your group next week about your outreach to extended family.





# Marriage: Dancing Lessons for Husband and Wife

*with Theresa Nelson*

**Today's Focus:** A marriage relationship can sometimes feel like a smooth dance where you are gliding along together in perfect sync—or a clumsy experience where you are stepping on each other's toes. Today we will review some lessons to strengthen our marriage “dance” together.

## I. Good things to know about marriage

1. Marriage is a work in progress. Each new dance takes time to learn.
2. It does take two to tango! But one can make a difference.  
 *Sacred Influence* by Gary Thomas
3. Amazing grace makes it possible to work on your marriage—and yourself!
4. Your marriage is even more important than your kids.

## II. Good things to know about husbands

1. They often feel invisible after the children come along.
2. They often feel inadequate at work.
3. They may feel like a failure at home.
4. They need *respect*, not just love.
5. When they feel like a hero in your eyes, they often begin to live up to that standard.





### III. Good things to do

1. Tell your husband what you need. He is not a mind reader.
2. Affirm your husband for the efforts he makes to meet those needs.
3. Be curious about your husband. Ask him what makes him feel most loved.
4. Tell your husband how you admire and respect him.
5. Decide that it is more important to be in relationship than it is to be “right.”
6. Act your way to a better way of feeling, rather than vice versa.
7. Spend time developing friendships and hobbies rather than expecting your husband to provide complete fulfillment.
8. Cultivate your relationship with God instead of expecting your husband to fill that God-shaped hole in your heart.

### IV. Good questions to ask yourself

1. Does your husband feel “lost in the shuffle” because the kids require so much attention?
2. How well do you know your husband?
3. When is the last time you expressed admiration and respect to your husband?
4. What do your kids think Mommy feels about Daddy?
5. Do you extend to your husband the grace that God has extended to you?
6. How are you cultivating your relationship with God?
7. How often do you pray for your husband?







## Reflections 8

# Marriage: Dancing Lessons for Husband and Wife

### Remember:

- Marriage is a work in progress.
- Marriage takes two. But one can make a difference.
- Marriage is made possible by God's grace.
- Marriage should be foundational—it comes first, before kids.

### Try to imagine your husband's perspective:

- He may feel “invisible” after kids come.
- He carries a huge responsibility and may feel inadequate at work.
- He can feel like a failure at home if he's treated that way.
- He needs respect as well as love.

### Some good reminders for wives:

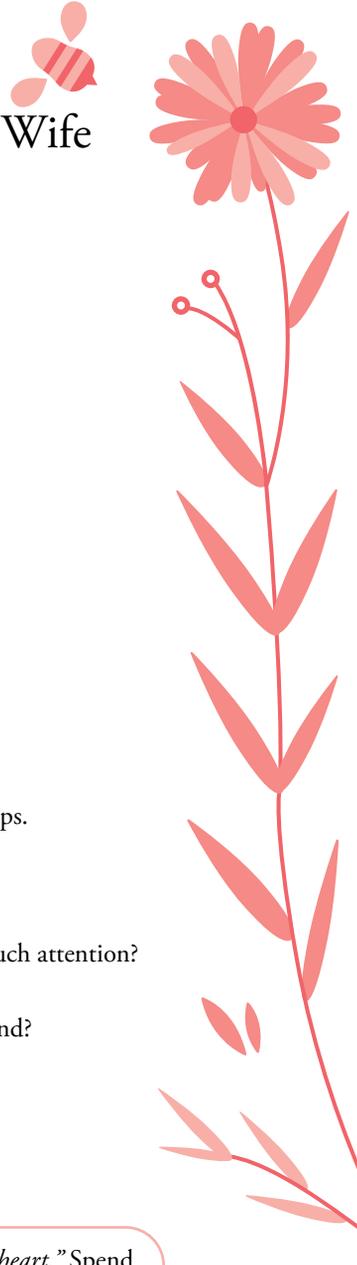
- Tell your husband what you need. He's not a mind reader.
- Be curious about him. Ask him what makes him feel loved.
- Remember that love is a verb. Sometimes feelings follow actions.
- Don't expect him to bear the full weight of your needs. Cultivate friendships.
- Cultivate your relationship with God.

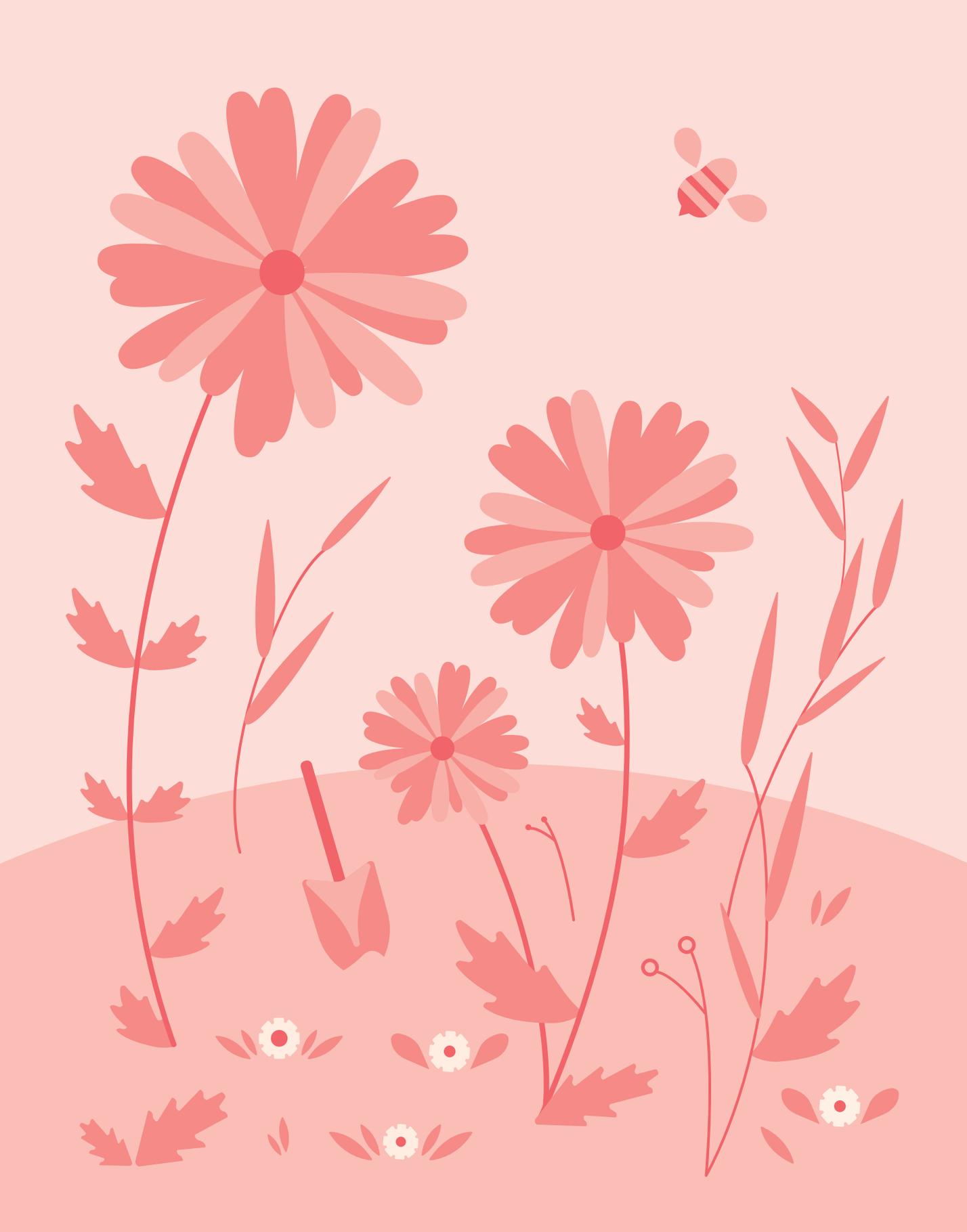
### Ask yourself:

- Does your husband feel “lost in the shuffle” because the kids require so much attention?
- How well do you know your husband?
- When is the last time you expressed admiration and respect to your husband?
- What do your kids think Mommy feels about Daddy?
- Do you extend to your husband the grace that God has extended to you?
- How are you cultivating your relationship with God?
- How often do you pray for your husband?

**Read and Grow:** 1 Peter 1:22 calls us to “. . . love one another deeply, from the heart.” Spend some time praying for your husband. Then jot down a few specific actions you can take to demonstrate this deep love from the heart to your husband.

**For Next Week:** Take a moment to envision the marriage “dance” you would like to experience in your home. Commit to take one step to move closer to that vision this week and, if you wish, be prepared to share with your group about that next week.





# Magnetic Marriages: Opposites Attract—and Then Repel?

with Theresa Nelson

**Today's Focus:** We are often attracted to “opposites” in dating relationships, but then are dismayed when our spouse does not become just like us after we are married! We will consider ways to bridge the divide with our “opposite” spouses, which may lead to more balance in our homes.

## I. Personality differences can attract or repel

1. Kindergarten Magnet Unit: Magnets adhere to one another until one turns its back on the other.
2. “At first opposites attract. Then opposites attack.” —Rick Warren

### Elements of Personality Types

Structured (“Make a plan”)	Spontaneous (“Go with the flow”)
Introvert (“Energized by being alone”)	Extrovert (“Energized by people”)
Thinker (“Lead with our heads”)	Feeler (“Lead with our hearts”)
Strict Parent (“Follow the rules”)	Fun Parent (“Have a good time”)
Saver (“Save up for tomorrow”)	Free Spender (“Enjoy today”)

## II. Being married to an “opposite” can make us more complete over time.

*The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body.*  
—1 Corinthians 12:12

1. A body is healthy when all the parts play their role.
2. When talking to your children, be sure to talk about your husband’s “opposite” tendencies as a positive and not a negative. No trash talking.
3. Maintain a posture of curiosity about your husband.
  - “What makes him act (or think) this way?”
  - “What can I learn from him?”
4. Opposites need to compromise.
5. Manage your own expectations.



### III. Tools that can bridge the divide

#### 1. Communication

- When you find yourself in conflict:
  - “Tell me what it feels like to be you.”
  - “Help me understand why this is important to you.”
  - Use code words to avoid repeating the same conflicts.
- Find a conversation time outside of conflict to discover more about your differences:
  - Talk about the traits that first attracted you to one another.
  - Talk about three things you each do to build up the relationship.
  - Describe the best things about your relationship.
  - Describe how you two typically handle conflict—and how you *wish* you handled conflict.

#### 2. Dwell on the Positive: Choose to focus on the positive aspects of your husband’s “opposite” nature.

- Healthy relationships have five positive interactions for every negative interaction.<sup>1</sup>

#### 3. Try It, You Just Might Like It: Take turns doing things the way each of you prefer. You just might learn something from each other.

#### 4. Compromise: Learn to meet in the middle.

#### 5. Seek Wise Counsel: Talk things through with an impartial third party.

#### 6. Grace and Forgiveness: Forgive yourself and your husband when you fall into old patterns—old habits die hard!

### IV. Stone wall vs. uniform brick wall

1. Start with a cornerstone and plumb line.
2. Major stones set in place and then filled in with smaller stones.
3. Everything fits together once sharp edges are trimmed away.

*You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house . . .*

*—1 Peter 2:5a*

---

1. John Gottman, *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail: And How You Can Make Yours Last*.





## *Discussion Questions*

### Magnetic Marriages: Opposites Attract—and Then Repel?

**Report Time:** Reflect on the marriage lessons discussed last week. Did you make any changes or take a step to invest in your marriage this week? Anything you would like to share with your group?

1. Are there areas in which you and your husband are opposites? Do those differences “attract” or “repel?”
2. Have you and your husband become more alike or more different since getting married?
3. What differences do you really appreciate in your husband? Have you told him that you admire those characteristics in him?
4. How are your children benefiting from the different perspectives you and your husband bring to the household?





5. Read aloud in your group the following excerpt from 1 Corinthians and discuss how it applies to marriage.

*<sup>12</sup>Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup>For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. <sup>14</sup>Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.*

*<sup>15</sup>Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. <sup>16</sup>And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. <sup>17</sup>If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup>But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. <sup>19</sup>If they were all one part, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup>As it is, there are many parts, but one body.*

*<sup>21</sup>The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” <sup>22</sup>On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup>and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, <sup>24</sup>while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, <sup>25</sup>so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. <sup>26</sup>If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.*

—1 Corinthians 12:12–26

6. Think about the analogy of a stone wall that is being built. What cornerstone is your marriage “wall” built upon? What is the plumb line that you have set as the standard for your relationship?

**For Next Week:** Think about your marriage relationship and areas where you and your husband may be “opposites.” Can you appreciate the positive aspects of your differences? What one step can you take to bridge that divide this week?



## Reflections 9

# Magnetic Marriages: Opposites Attract—and Then Repel?

### The goal:

Try to make your personality differences work *for* you in your marriage, not against you. Look for ways to do that this week.

### Watch out for:

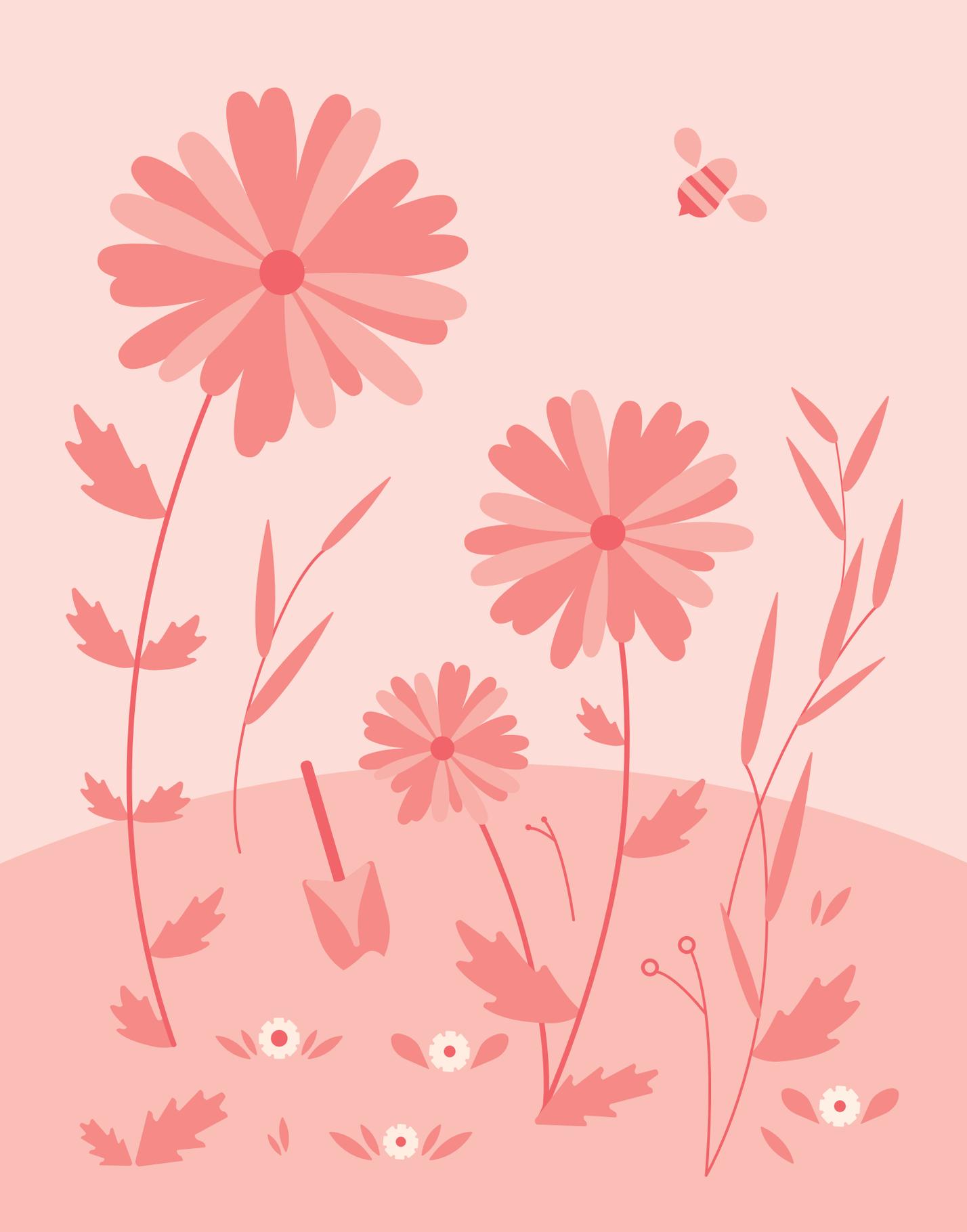
Assumptions that your husband's differences in perspective are obviously inferior to yours  
Trash talking to your kids about your husband's "weird quirks"  
Automatic opposition to compromise  
Skewed or distorted perspectives

### Try these tools:

Ask "help me understand why this is important to you" questions.  
Seek productive conversations about differences (refer to the tips in the outline).  
Focus on some of the positive ways your differences can enhance your marriage.  
Take turns trying each other's ways of doing things. You may learn something!  
Work toward compromise.  
Give mutual grace and forgiveness.

**Read and Grow:** 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Peter 2:4–5 give two different images of how things can fit together—a body and a wall. Read both of these passages and reflect on what they may have to say to you about your marriage. If possible, read both of these together with your husband and discuss how these examples apply to your relationship. Then make a list of some specific things you can do to "build up the body of your marriage" or fit the pieces of your wall together more effectively.

**For Next Week:** Think about your marriage relationship and areas where you and your husband may be "opposites." Can you appreciate the positive aspects of your differences? What one step can you take to bridge that divide this week?



# A Mom's Guide to Navigating Educational Differences

with Theresa Nelson

**Today's Focus:** Every child is uniquely made by our Creator, and sometimes that unique profile includes some learning challenges. It can feel overwhelming to navigate the confusing maze of school systems to get help for our kids who experience educational differences, but it is worth the effort!

*For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Psalm 139:13–14*

## I. Keep calm and carry on

1. Don't get stuck in emotions; learn to advocate for your child.
  - 📖 *From Emotions to Advocacy* by Peter and Pamela Wright
2. Birth through Age 3
  - **Pediatrician** is front line of contact
  - Meeting developmental milestones?
    - 📖 Book series by Louise Bates Ames, Ph.D.:
      - Your One-Year-Old*
      - Your Two-Year-Old*
    - 📖 Book series by The Tavistock Clinic:
      - Understanding Your One-Year-Old*
      - Understanding Your Two-Year-Old*
  - Early Intervention programs available
3. Ages 3–5
  - **Pediatrician** is still first line of contact; also preschool teachers.
  - Developing social skills and classroom behavior are primary objectives.
  - Integrated preschools are available.
4. School-Aged Children
  - **Teachers** are first line of contact.
  - Learning to read is primary goal and primary red flag.
  - Special education programs are available in schools.



## II. Attention differences (e.g., ADD and ADHD)

1. Common symptoms:
  - Focus on self (interrupting, difficulty taking turns)
  - Emotional turmoil
  - Fidgety
  - Lack of focus, daydreaming
  - Unfinished tasks
  - Misplaces or loses items
2. Potential intervention strategies:
  - Front-row seating
  - Fidget toys
  - Standing desks
  - Movement breaks
  - Medications

## III. Social emotional differences (e.g., Autism or Sensory Processing)

1. Common symptoms:
  - No smiling or eye contact
  - Non-verbal (lack of baby babbling, no words by 16 months)
  - Does not respond to first name by 12 months
  - Under- or oversensitive to sounds, textures, movement or other stimulation
  - Avoids touch or cuddling
  - Little facial expression
  - Limited interest in play or activities
  - Fixations
  - Picky eater, limited to certain tastes/textures
2. Potential intervention strategies:
  - Pro-social support groups
  - Role playing
  - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
  - Desensitization programs



## IV. Language-based learning differences (e.g., Dyslexia)

1. Common symptoms:
  - Difficulty pronouncing words
  - Difficulty writing his/her own name
  - Difficulty rhyming
  - Difficulty learning letters, numbers, colors
  - Juxtaposes letters and numbers when writing
  - Reverses letters b and d, and p and q
  - Cannot tell left from right
  - Difficulty with phonemic awareness (sounds that letters represent)
2. Potential intervention strategies:
  - Orton-Gillingham- or Wilson-trained teachers
  - Multisensory teaching strategies
  - Audio books and other assistive learning technology

## V. The process

1. Testing and Diagnosis: 2–3 days of assessments with a trained professional
2. Make a Plan: Develop a plan for accommodations or Individualized Education Plan (IEP) with teachers and specialists
3. Assemble a Team: Special educators, tutors, education advocates, or attorneys

## VI. Finding a balance

1. Education is of supreme importance vs. Education isn't that important
2. Sweep it under the rug vs. Catastrophizing
3. Teacher knows best vs. A mother's intuition
4. Argumentative parent/teacher relationship vs. Polite call to action
5. Addressing student's weaknesses vs. Celebrating unique gifting



## VII. Additional resources

- 🌐 Wrightslaw, a website with accurate, reliable information about special education law: <http://www.wrightslaw.com>
- 📖 *Nurture by Nature* by Paul D. Tieger and Barbara Barron-Tieger





## Discussion Questions

# A Mom's Guide to Navigating Educational Differences

**Report Time:** Over the past few weeks, we have been focused on the topic of marriage. Share with the group about some new strategies you've been trying in your marriage. What have you learned from the experience thus far?

1. Describe the approach to education in your childhood home. Were you sent to public school or private school or were you homeschooled? Did your parents place too much/too little emphasis on education?
2. Are you currently experiencing any educational differences in your household? Any in your childhood when you were growing up?
3. For those of you who are not facing educational differences in your own home: Does any of the information in today's lecture help you understand a learning challenge in your extended family or friend group?





4. Describe your working relationship with your pediatrician. Based on today's lecture, are there any specific questions you think you should ask your pediatrician about your child?
  
5. Do you have any emotions about your child and his/her future that make it difficult for you to be an advocate?
  
6. Look back over the section about finding balance in education. Can you apply any of those lessons in your household?
  
7. Describe your expectations, hopes, and aspirations for your child's education. Are you placing too much emphasis on education? Are you making education the "savior" in your family?

**For Next Week:** Take a moment to think about the educational goals you have for your children. Make note of any educational differences you may notice in your child(ren) and, if appropriate, consider asking teachers or your pediatrician for feedback.



## Reflections 10

# A Mom's Guide to Navigating Educational Differences

### Get to know your child:

A big part of mom life is getting to know each child and understanding their unique differences and needs. Are you utilizing helpful resources and team members: pediatricians, teachers, and books/web sites on developmental stages in children?

### Stay alert but don't obsess or panic:

As your child grows, keep an eye out for any particular needs he might have that might merit further assessment. In all these areas, remember that each child is unique and has their own developmental time clock.

- Attention span
- Social and emotional issues
- Speech and language development
- Learning differences

### Find the balance between:

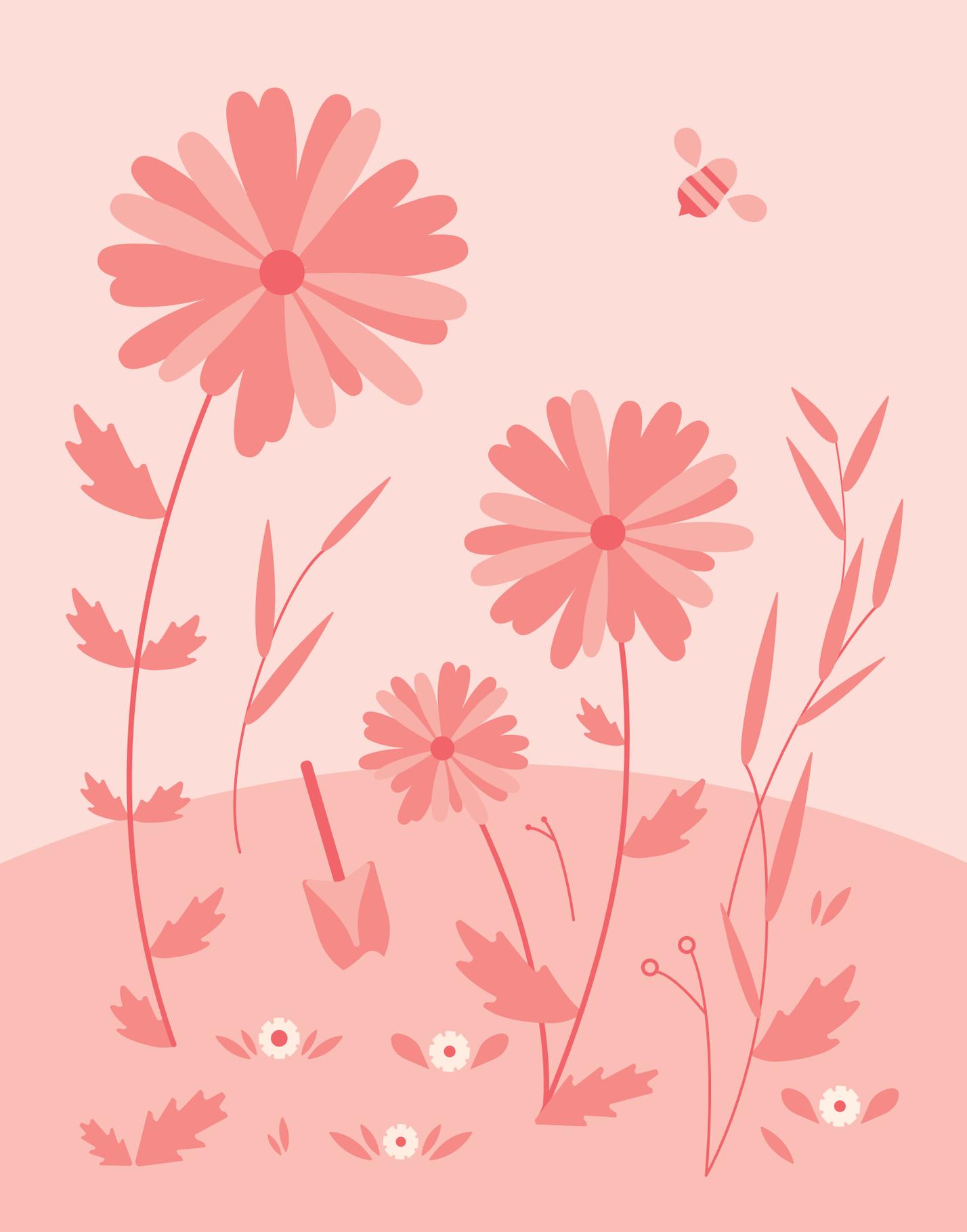
- Overemphasizing vs. underestimating the importance of education
- Denial vs. catastrophizing
- Teacher-knows-best vs. mama intuition
- Argumentative parent vs. polite call to action
- Addressing weaknesses vs. celebrating unique gifting

### Remember:

- Don't be afraid to get information.
- Knowledge is power.
- God made your child unique and for a special purpose.

**Read and Grow:** Read Psalm 139:13–16 in several different versions (a great website for this purpose is [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)). How does this passage shed light on your children and God's purposes for them?

**For Next Week:** Take a moment to think about the educational goals you have for your children. Make note of any educational differences you may notice in your child(ren) and, if appropriate, consider asking teachers or your pediatrician for feedback.





# Hidden Losses of Mom Life: Infertility, Miscarriage, and Adoption

*with Linda Anderson*

**Today's Focus:** In this session we will discuss three losses common to young moms that are not always acknowledged or understood. We will consider the challenges common to all these situations, as well as those unique to each. Our goal will be to remind those experiencing these losses that they are not alone, as well as to increase our understanding of what is and is not helpful to those walking through loss. Above all, we want to encourage one another to find refuge in the God of all comfort, Who weeps with us and loves us always.

## I. Purpose and goals

1. Common experience among moms
2. Importance of community care for one another
3. Clarification of goals: What we can and cannot do in this time together

## II. Common challenges

Infertility, miscarriage, and adoption all:

1. Involve loss, dealing with disappointment at some level
2. Are subject to misunderstanding or lack of understanding on the part of family and friends
3. Can do a number on your marriage—big time!
4. Can be experienced very differently by husbands and wives
5. Can profoundly affect your relationship with God

## III. Dealing with infertility

1. Roller coaster emotions; dangers of blame game
2. Stress of complex treatment options; differences of opinion
3. Pregnancy envy; “looking around” (see John 21:21–22)





4. Raises big questions with God: Where on earth are you in all of this?  
What got me through “The Night I Couldn’t Talk to God”:
  - Friends’ prayers
  - Holy Spirit’s prayers (Romans 8:26–27)
  - Jesus’ prayers (Romans 8:34)
5. Note to friends—beware of:
  - False promising and misused Scripture
  - Judgment as to choices: Remember Who is God and who is not!

#### IV. Walking through miscarriage

1. Different women experience differently; there are many variables.
2. Allow yourself time and emotional space to grieve as you need to.
3. Be aware that future pregnancy or adoption can be a wonderful redemption story, but doesn’t replace the loss.
4. Note to friends—beware of:
  - Trite truisms (“It’s God way of taking care of . . .”)
  - False promising or misuse of Scripture (as with infertility)
  - Forgetting this is a death; loss of a baby in any way is a death
  - Asking intrusive questions. Respect their need to share *if* and *when* they choose.

#### V. The adoption journey

1. Not necessarily a “second choice”; but always involves loss at some level
2. Includes many different options, paths, stories; pursue spousal agreement
3. Can involve excruciatingly long waits; once again, “Where is God in all this?”
4. Can open you up to devastating disappointments/failed adoptions





## VI. My prayer for you, fellow travelers on this road

1. Be alert to challenges to your marriage; work to walk this road together
2. Be aware of potential challenges to your relationship with God
  - If you take your pain to God, He will be there for you. He can take it all!
 

“One bold message in the book of Job is that you can say anything to God. Throw at him your grief, your anger, your doubt, your bitterness, your betrayal, your disappointment—he can absorb them all. . . . God can deal with every human response save one. He cannot abide the response I fall back on instinctively: an attempt to ignore him or treat him as though he does not exist.”<sup>1</sup>
  - Remember: He sees you. He hears you. He knows what you are going through.
 

*All my longings are open before you, O Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you.* —Psalm 38:9
  - He also grieves with you. Give yourself space to do the same.
 

🎵 Rend Collective song: “Weep with Me”

“Occasionally, weep deeply over the life you hoped would be. Grieve the losses. Then wash your face. Trust God. And embrace the life you have.”<sup>2</sup>
  - Do just one thing to hold on. Scripture (Psalms) or music can give you words you don’t have.
3. Be watchful:
  - Sometimes God surprises us with His Light in our darkness. (Micah 7:8b)
  - There can be unexpected joys that grow out of loss.
4. Be present. Just be there for your friends (Listen. Love. Pray. Don’t judge!).
 

“Come sit beside me on my mourning bench.”<sup>3</sup>

---

1. Philip Yancey, *Disappointment with God* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1992).  
 2. John Piper, from his website, [www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org), accessed 9/2/2022.  
 3. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1987).





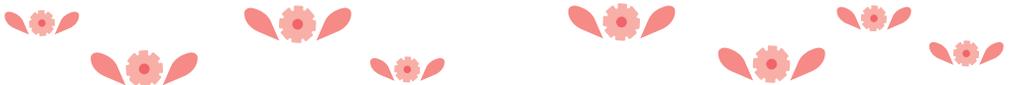
## Discussion Questions

### Hidden Losses of Mom Life: Infertility, Miscarriage, and Adoption

**Report Time:** In last week's session, we discussed educational differences in our kids. Is there anything you would like to share with your group about your observations of your child's unique learning style?

1. In what way(s) did you connect with today's session:
  - personal experience with one or more of these losses
  - friend or family experiences
  - "big picture" perspective on some similar loss or loss in general
2. At whatever level you connect with one of these losses or another similar loss, what has been most helpful to you in your process toward healing and health?
3. What have you found least helpful or perhaps even wounding?
4. How (if at all) has your journey complicated—or helped—your relationship with God?
5. What will be your personal take-away from this session?

**For Next Week:** Reflect on today's message of hope and healing for yourself or someone you know who has experienced one of these "hidden losses" of mom life. What one truth can you claim from today's lesson that might be of some encouragement?



## Reflections 11

# Hidden Losses of Mom Life: Infertility, Miscarriage, and Adoption

What encouragement can you take from knowing, when you find it hard to pray, that:

- Friends are praying for you
- The Holy Spirit prays for you (Romans 8:26–27)
- Jesus prays for you (Romans 8:34)

As you walk alongside friends experiencing loss, try to avoid:

- Raising false hopes
- Offering trite explanations or unhelpful truisms
- Forgetting that miscarriage involves the death of a baby
- Misusing scripture to offer false “promises”
- Asking intrusive questions (allow them to choose what to share—and when)

Instead, come alongside to “be there,” listen when they need to talk, and offer practical help.

Whatever losses or challenges you may be experiencing . . .

Be alert. Times like these can tear your marriage apart or bring you together.

Be aware.

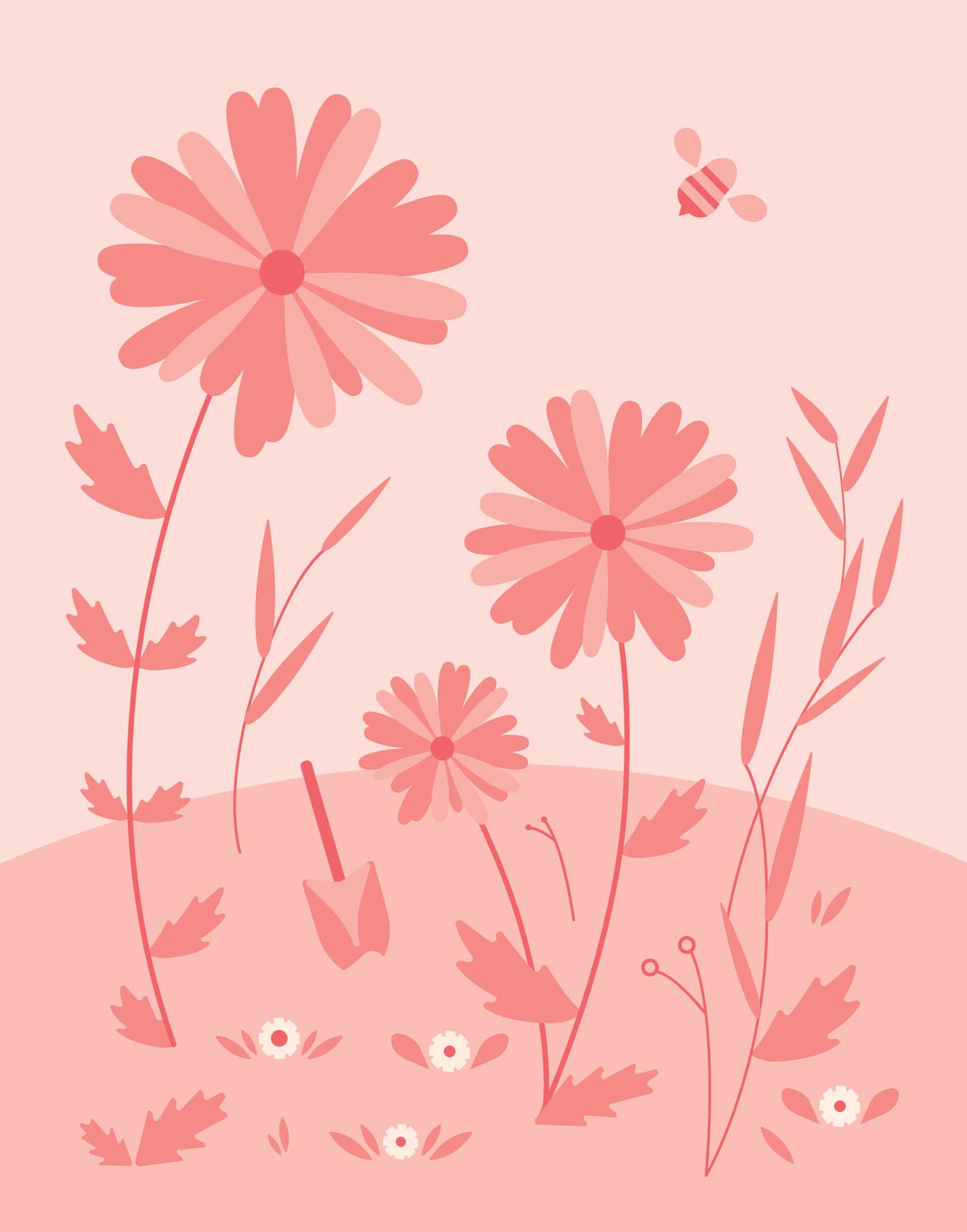
- You can pour out your feelings to God. He wants to hear from you.
- God sees you, hears you, and knows what you are going through.
- God even grieves with you. Give yourself space to do the same.

Be watchful.

- Sometimes God surprises us in dark moments with more of His Light.
- There can be unexpected joys that grow out of loss.

**Read and Grow:** Read Psalm 38:9 and reflect on God’s knowing exactly what you are going through, what you are feeling. What do you need to talk to Him about? If it helps, try pouring out your feelings on paper as you bring your yearnings to Him.

**For Next Week:** Reflect on today’s message of hope and healing for yourself or someone you know who has experienced one of these “hidden losses” of mom life. What one truth can you claim from today’s lesson that might be of some encouragement?





# Teens, Tweens, and Self-Esteem

with Theresa Nelson

**Today's Focus:** It can be tricky to build up healthy self-esteem in our kids who face the challenging effects of social media and other cultural influences. Let's take a look at how Jesus interacted with a woman who had poor self-esteem: the Samaritan woman at the well.

## I. Balance of self-worth and humility

The balance between self-worth and humility lies in the juxtaposition of two facts:

1. Our sin is so great that Jesus had to die for our sins. (Bummer!)
2. Jesus loves us so much he was willing to die for us. (Wow!)

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.* — Ephesians 2:8–9

## II. Sobering statistics on today's adolescent<sup>1</sup>

1. About 20% of teens will experience depression before they reach adulthood
2. Self-esteem in girls peaks at age 9 and then takes a nosedive: 75% of 8–9 year olds like their looks, but only 56% of 12–13 year olds like their looks.
3. Among high school students, 44% of girls and 15% of guys are trying to lose weight.
4. Not just girls: more than 40% middle school and high school boys regularly exercise with the goal of building muscle mass. 38% of them report using protein supplements and nearly 6% admit experimenting with steroids.
5. Poor self-esteem leads to self-destructive behavior. 75% of girls with low self-esteem engage in negative behaviors (cutting, bullying, drinking, smoking, eating disorders) while only 25% of girls with high self-esteem engage in those activities. Girls with poor self-esteem are also *four times* more likely to engage in sexual activity with boys that they later regret.

1. <http://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-teens-and-self-esteem>, accessed 9/2/2022





### III. Jesus and the woman at the well (John 4)

1. She is definitely a woman of low self-esteem.  
She had come to draw water during the heat of high noon instead of later in the evening when the other local women would draw water.
2. Jesus humbles himself and asks for her help.  
*“Will you give me a drink?”*
3. Jesus bridges cultural barriers and prejudices.  
*“You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?”*
4. Jesus does not ignore her shortcomings.  
*“The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband.”*
5. Jesus does not get mired in religious rules.  
He ignores her question about which mountain is the proper location for worship.
6. Jesus seeks redemption for this woman.  
*“Woman, . . . believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father . . .”*

### IV. Let's get practical

1. Love your children for who they are, not what they do.
2. Model forgiveness. Kids need to know they can mess up and be forgiven.
3. Bridge “cultural” gaps like Jesus did with the Samaritan woman.
4. Learn to like their friends.
5. Don't do everything for your child; it sends a message of incompetency.





6. Don't ignore your child's shortcomings.
7. Find something your child is good at.
8. Celebrate your child's unique skills and gifts, even if you can't relate.
9. Enlist other trusted adults to speak truth and encouragement into your child.
10. Get your children to stop focusing on themselves! Look for service opportunities that make them feel empowered.
11. Be intentional about creating opportunities to just talk with your adolescents. Top wish among all teen girls is for better communication with their parents.

**Kids need to know that God created them the way they are for a purpose.**

*“The water I give him will become in him  
a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”  
—John 4:13*





## Discussion Questions

### Teens, Tweens, and Self-Esteem

**Report Time:** In our last session, we discussed the emotional turmoil of infertility, miscarriage, and adoption. Have you had the opportunity to reflect on the message of hope and healing for loss in your own life or the life of someone close to you? If so, any further thoughts you'd like to share?

1. What are some of the self-esteem shredders you face in your households?
2. Describe some things that boost self-esteem in your teens/tweens.
3. Were you surprised or alarmed by any of the self-esteem statistics shared today? Why or why not?
4. What did you observe in Jesus's interaction with the Samaritan woman in today's Bible passage?
5. Which of the practical tips discussed today would be most helpful in your household?

**For Next Week:** Think about the teens and tweens you know in your own home, in your extended family, or in your church community. What can you do this week to express God's love and purpose to them?



## Reflections 12

### Teens, Tweens, and Self-Esteem

#### Remember the foundation of our self worth (see Ephesians 2:8–9):

The sad fact: Our sins are so great that Jesus had to die for them.

The stunning truth: Jesus loves us so much that He gave His own life for ours.

#### Check your attitude:

Do you love your children for who they are, not just what they do?

Are you willing to try to bridge cultural divides? Do you distinguish between Biblical and spiritual principles vs. personal preferences?

Do you celebrate your children's unique gifts?

Do you model forgiveness in your own walk with God? With your kids?

#### Take action!

Get to know your children's friends.

Don't do for your kids what they could or should do.

Deal with their shortcomings in constructive ways.

Be on the alert for things your kids are good at.

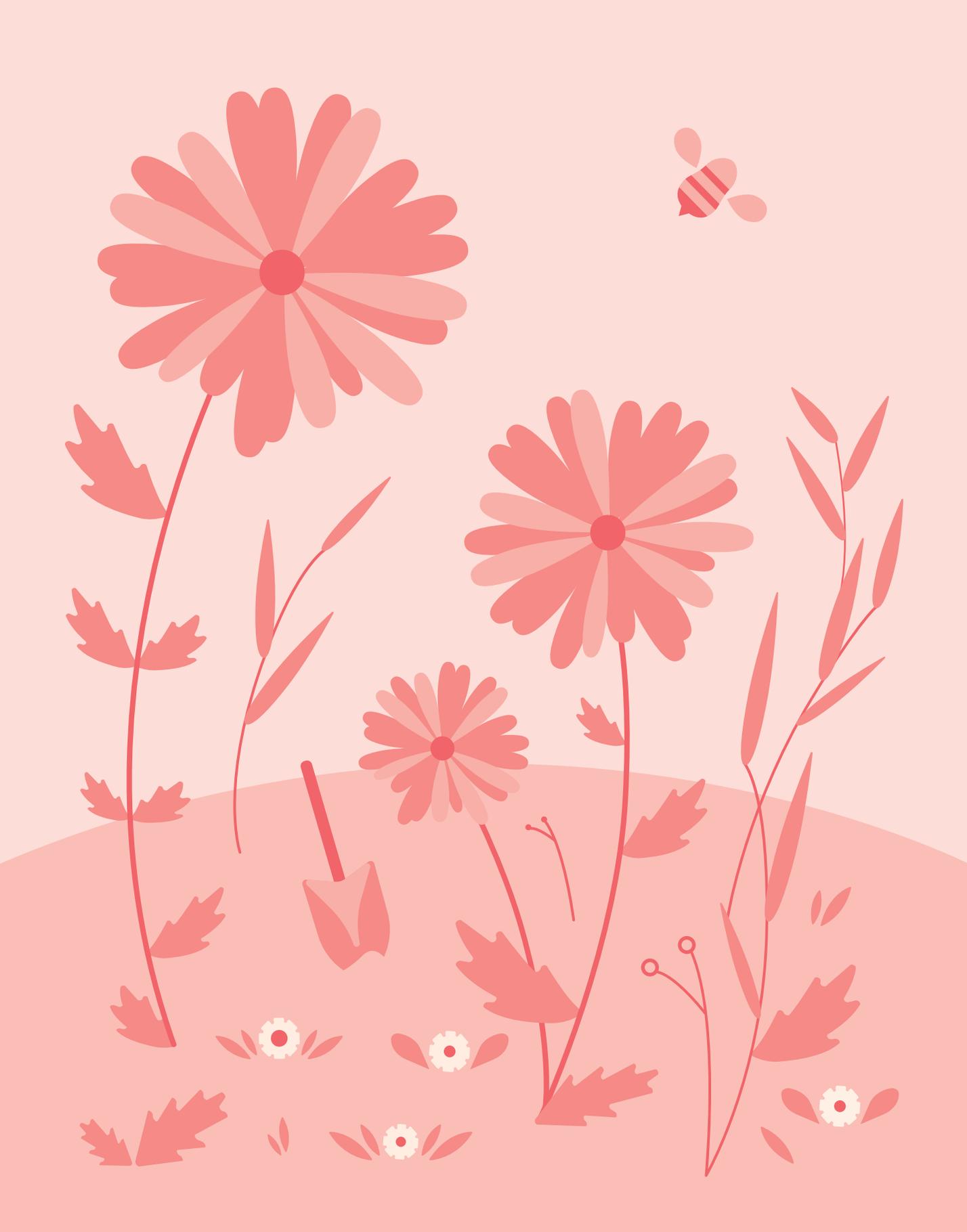
Enlist other adults who will help build healthy self-worth in your kids.

Seek opportunities for them to get involved in service projects.

Be intentional about finding "talk time" with them.

**Read and Grow:** Read over John 4 (the entire chapter). Look for things you can learn from Jesus' encounter with this woman that you could apply to your relationship with your children. Note both Jesus' words and His actions.

**For Next Week:** Think about the teens and tweens you know in your own home, in your extended family, or in your church community. What can you do this week to express God's love and purpose to them?





# Hope and a Future for the Strong-Willed Child

with Theresa Nelson

**Today's Focus:** If you are the mother of a strong-willed child, you know they can dig in their heels when they set their minds to something! While it can be exhausting to parent a strong-willed toddler or preschooler, you just might appreciate that strong will and determination when your child gets older. In today's lesson, we will discover that God has "a hope and a future" for our strong-willed children.

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord,  
"plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."  
—Jeremiah 29:11*

## I. Strong-willed child vs. defiant/rebellious child

1. Characterized by steely determination, not defiance or rebellion
2. Not intentionally hurtful to other people
3. Characteristics of a strong-willed child<sup>1</sup>:
  - Never accepts the term "impossible"
  - Quickly shifts from warm, loving nature to cold immovable force
  - Argues a point, just to see how far the argument will go
  - If bored, can actually create a crisis
  - Considers rules to be "guidelines"
  - Rarely obeys unconditionally but negotiates terms before complying ("because I said so" does not work with this child!)
  - Not afraid to conquer the unknown
  - May not actually say the words "I'm sorry" but will make the situation right

## II. God has strong-willed children

1. God spoke to His strong-willed people through the prophet Jeremiah.
  - He demonstrated patience with the stiff-necked Israelites. (Jeremiah 7, 19)
  - He promised them hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11)

1. Cynthia Tobias, *You Can't Make Me (But I Can Be Persuaded)* (Waterbrook Press, Colorado Springs, CO, 2012)





2. Jesus taught His strong-willed disciple, Peter.
  - Firm authority
    - “*Get behind me, Satan!*” (Matthew 16:23)
  - Patience in the face of immaturity
    - Jesus repaired the ear of the high priest’s servant. (John 18:10–11 and Luke 22:50–51)
  - Unconditional love
    - Jesus made breakfast on the beach for Peter. (John 21:10–13)
    - A redemptive close (John 21:15–19)

### III. What does this look like if you are a parent, and not Jesus?

1. Firm authority
  - Decide in advance what you will “go to the wall for.”
  - Consistency, consistency, consistency
  - Ask more questions and issue fewer demands.
  - Say “yes” when you can, so you can say “no” when you have to.
2. Patience in the face of immaturity
  - Be an advocate for your child.
  - Let them experience natural consequences.
3. Unconditional love
  - Strong-willed kids especially need unconditional love; they often feel unlovable.







4. For those of you with strong-willed children, what are the issues they dig in their heels about? What are some ways that you have been able to diffuse those situations?
  
5. How could you demonstrate firm parental authority with your children? What are the issues you are willing to “go to the wall” for?
  
6. What are some ways that you demonstrate patience with your child’s age-appropriate immaturity? Describe some ways that you can care for yourself so that you do not lose patience with your children.
  
7. What are some specific ways that you express unconditional love to your children? Do you think your children *feel* loved unconditionally?

**For Next Week:** Think about the mom of a strong-willed child you know. (Maybe that mom is yourself!) Share with her one highlight from this lesson about the “hope and a future” that God has for that precious strong-willed child.



## Reflections 13

### Hope and a Future for the Strong-Willed Child

Take heart! God has strong-willed children, too.

Jeremiah: a prophet to strong-willed people

Peter: a strong-willed disciple

#### Strong-willed kids benefit from:

Firm authority

- Choose what you will go to the wall for.
- Be consistent.
- Prioritize question-asking over demands.
- Say *yes* when you can, *no* when you have to.

Patience in the face of immaturity

- Be your child's advocate.
- Allow them to experience natural consequences.

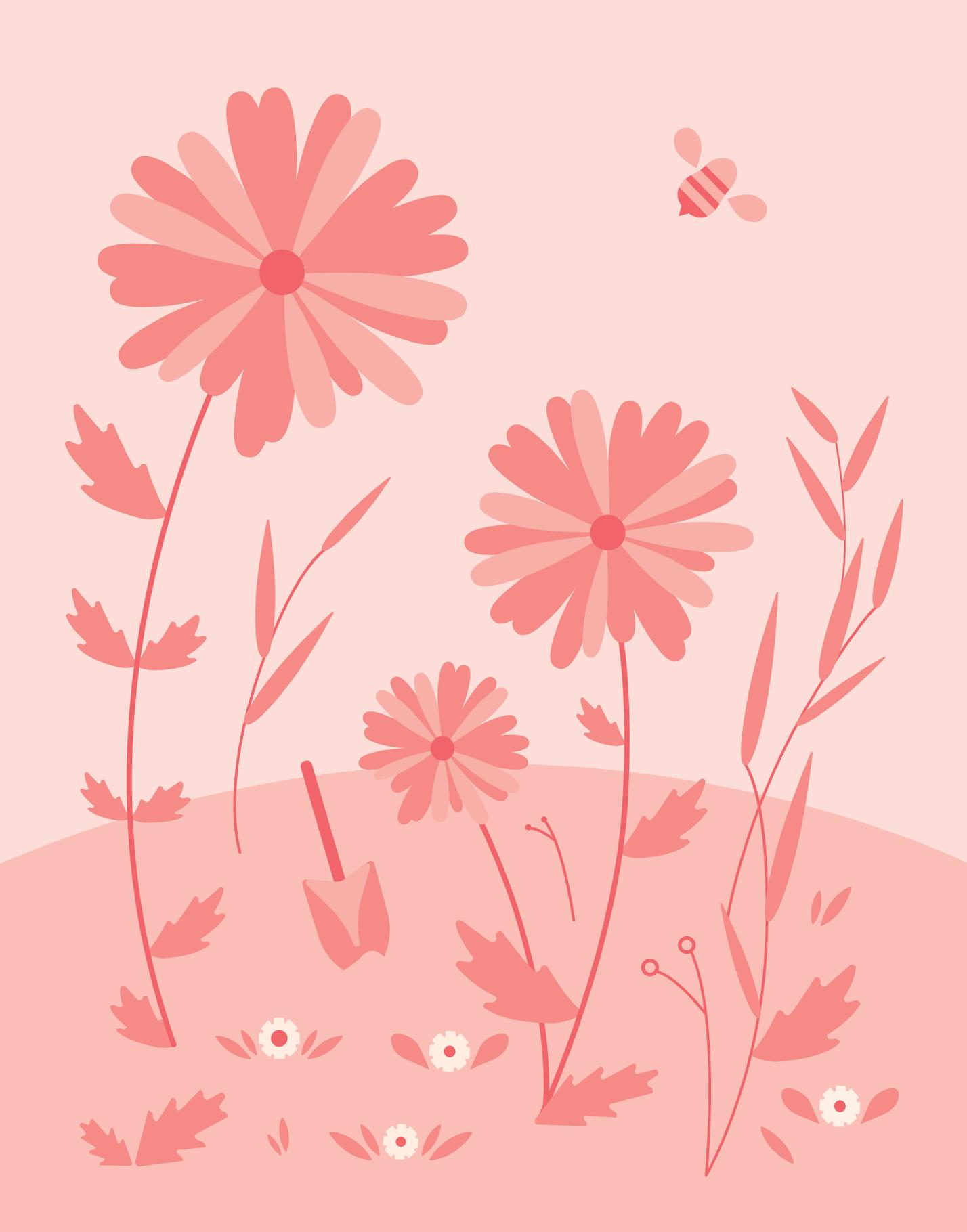
Unconditional love

- Strong-willed kids often feel unlovable.
- Strong-willed kids especially need unconditional love.

**Read and Grow:** Read and memorize the verse below. Reflect on your hopes and dreams for your strong-willed child(ren). Or try journaling about them. Then pray this verse for them:

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*  
—Jeremiah 29:11

**For Next Week:** Think about the mom of a strong-willed child you know. (Maybe that mom is yourself!) Share with her one highlight from this lesson about the “hope and a future” that God has for that precious strong-willed child.





# When You Feel like a Failure

*with Theresa Nelson*

**Today's Focus:** We want to offer hope and encouragement to moms who sometimes may feel like a failure—basically, any mom who has ever lived! Today we will learn to replace the “I’m a failure” lies with the freeing truths we read in God’s word.

## I. The progression

1. Do you find yourself saying—or feeling:
  - “I am at my wits’ end. I’ve tried everything. I just don’t know what to do. I feel like the biggest failure. What am I doing wrong? *Help!*”
  - “No matter how hard I try, I can’t seem to be enough. There’s just not enough of me to go around. I’m always behind. I’m overwhelmed. I feel defeated.”
  - “I’m blowing it as a mom. I started the day with the best intentions, but it’s only 9 am and I’ve lost my temper with the kids, I’m exhausted, and I don’t know how I’ll make it through the day. Whatever happens to my kids in the future, it will be my fault.”
2. What triggers this “I feel like a failure” syndrome?
  - Developmental stages/special needs
  - Behavioral issues
  - “Mom fog” thinking

Results of above:

“Something’s going on that needs my attention” becomes “I am such a failure!”

## II. The causes(s): Where do these feelings come from?

1. The performance trap: We have high (overly high!) expectations—of ourselves and our kids.
2. The comparison trap: We compare our insides (how we feel as a mom) with everyone else’s outsides (what great moms everyone else appear to be—especially on social media!) and always come up short.





3. Just plain exhaustion: It's hard to see clearly when you are sleep-deprived.
4. Overlooking the uniqueness of each child: Your three-year-old is not wired the same way as your neighbor's child—or even your other children!
5. A misunderstanding of our roles as moms: We confuse our job with God's!
6. We care so much! We really want to be good moms. After all, didn't God give us these children? That's where we go for help.

### III. The cure: Replace the “I'm a failure” lies with God's truth.

*“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* —John 8:32

1. **Freeing Truth #1:** God chose you to mother the particular children He's given you. When He calls us to a task, He gives us everything we need to do it. (See Exodus 3–4 and 2 Peter 1:3)
2. **Freeing Truth #2:** Parenting is a continual growth opportunity. We are always learning on the job. Even greats like the Apostles Paul and Peter were lifelong learners. (See Philippians 3:12–14 and 2 Peter 3:18)
3. **Freeing Truth #3:** God is not finished yet—with you or your kids. He has only begun, and He finishes what He starts. (See Philippians 1:6)
4. **Freeing Truth #4:** God—and your children—are very forgiving. You will make mistakes, but forgiveness, mercy, and grace are always available. (See 1 John 1:9)
5. **Freeing Truth #5:** Your children are His first—and He loves them more than you do. And you are not ultimately in charge—He is! There is nothing you could do to them that is beyond His healing and grace in their lives.





#### IV. A personal prescription: Let's get practical!

1. Relax! You're normal! All moms feel this way occasionally—or a lot! Okay, maybe every day.
2. Give yourself a break every day—or at least most days. Go for a run, take a nap, read a book, sip a cup of tea while they are napping, or go to bed early—just after the kids do—now and then.
3. Lighten up on yourself. When the “I’m a failure” voice appears, replace it with God’s truths. At the end of the day, think of the list of good things you did for your children rather than the ways you blew it.
4. Laugh more. Consider how hilarious a video of your day would be!
5. Cultivate the right kind of friends: the real ones, who share their struggles as well as their successes.
6. Monitor your social media consumption. Too much screen time can be hazardous to your health!

“We were never designed to live on guilt, or grit,  
or gratitude, but on grace.”<sup>1</sup>

---

1. John-Mark Mullan, The Sandel Centre, Coleraine, Northern Ireland, UK





## Discussion Questions

### When You Feel like a Failure

**Report Time:** Think back on last week's lesson about "hope and a future" for the strong-willed child. How were you encouraged this week in dealing with a strong-willed child in your life? Any thoughts you can share with your group?

1. What are the triggers for any "I feel like a failure" feelings you have? Are there particular situations, people, or behaviors that spark these feelings in you?
2. Which of the "Inner Causes" of these feelings most resonate with you at this stage in your mom life?
3. Which of the "Freeing Truths" from God do you most need to reflect on? To live by?
4. Which of the "Practical Strategies" would you most like to pursue? Do you have other suggestions that you can share with your group?
5. How can your group pray for you this week?

**For Next Week:** Choose one of the practical steps from the "Personal Prescription" section in today's lesson and make an effort to implement that recommendation in your home this week. Be ready to share with your group next week about that experience.



## Reflections 14

### When You Feel like a Failure

Replace your “feel like a failure” feelings with God’s truth:

*Freeing Truth #1:* God chose you to mother the children He gave you. He equips you.

*Freeing Truth #2:* Parenting is a continual growth opportunity. We are always learning.

*Freeing Truth #3:* God is not finished yet—with you or your kids.

*Freeing Truth #4:* God—and your children—are very forgiving.

*Freeing Truth #5:* God loves your kids more than you do. You’re not in charge. He is!

Get practical. Try these tips:

Relax! You are normal. All moms feel this way.

Give yourself a break every day you can—a nap, a run, a book, a cup of tea.

Lighten up on yourself. Reflect on the good things you do for your kids.

Laugh more. Picture what video footage of your day would look like.

Cultivate friends that are “real,” sharing their struggles as well as successes.

Monitor your social media consumption. Take a break from media as you need it.

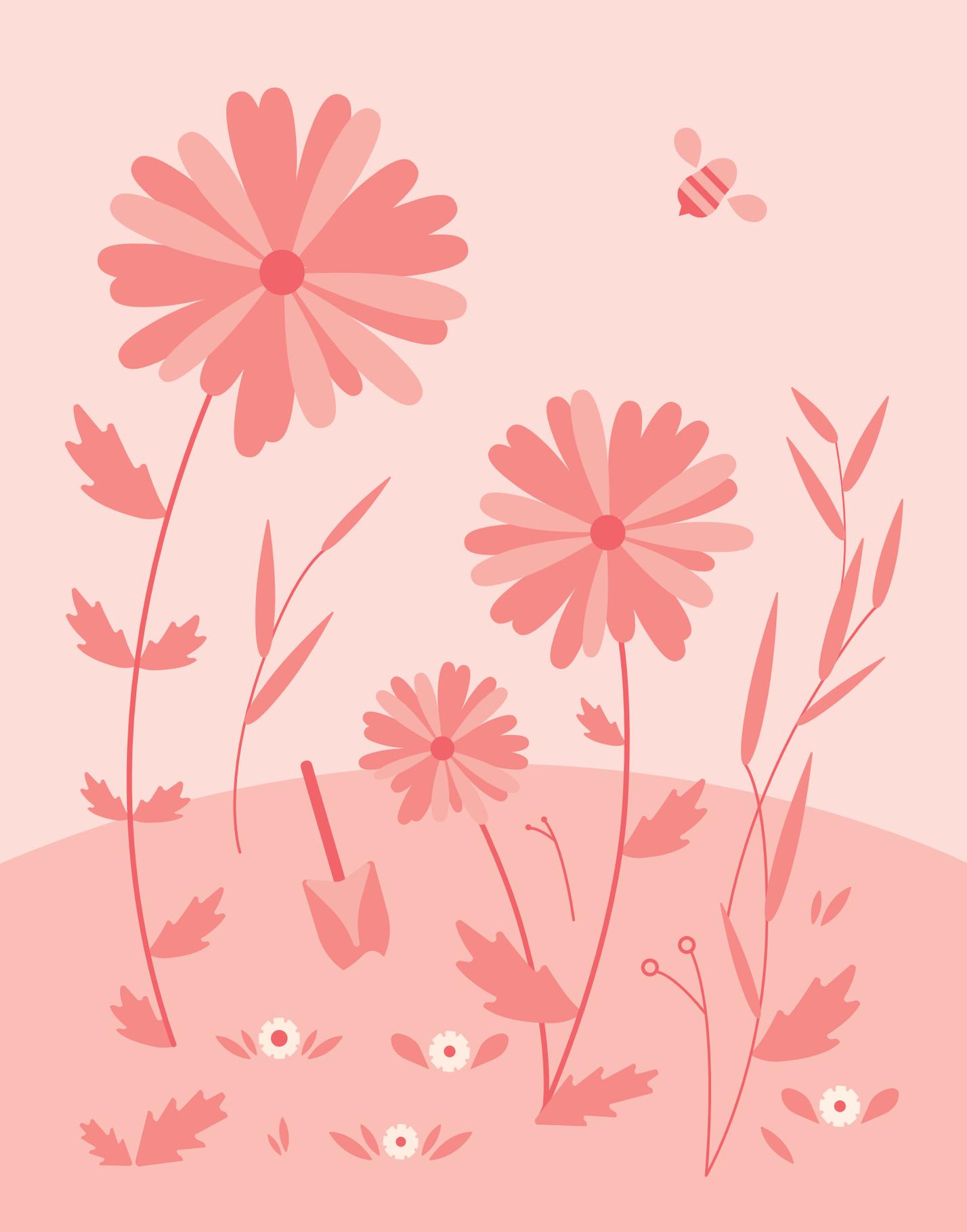
Give yourself as much grace as God does!

**Read and Grow:** Read below Jesus’ words to Peter prior to Peter’s denial of Jesus. What hope does Jesus hold out to Peter even before he fails? What hope can we find in this as moms?

*“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”*

—Luke 22:31–32

**For Next Week:** Choose one of the practical steps from the “Personal Prescription” section in today’s lesson and make an effort to implement that recommendation in your home this week. Be ready to share with your group next week about that experience.





# Giving Your Kids Roots and Wings

with Theresa Nelson

**Today's Focus:** We want to plant strong roots in our children so they will one day develop broad wings and navigate life on their own—someday! From our earliest interactions with our children, we nurture the roots of self-identity, family identity, and faith identity to give them the strength and courage to soar.

## I. Planting strong roots

### 1. Self-identity

- Help your children learn who they are: their beliefs, values, personality, and preferences.
- Teach your children that they were made by God—in God's image—with a unique set of gifts and personality traits.

 *You Are Special* by Max Lucado

 *You Are Mine* by Max Lucado

### 2. Family identity

- Instill a sense of belonging to the family—whether that be by birth, by adoption, or through a blended family.
- Grow your camaraderie together through family traditions and celebrations.
- Teach them a family code of conduct to give them a sense of responsibility to the family unit.

### 3. Faith identity

- Help your children learn what it means to be a child of God, deeply loved and redeemed at great cost.
- Help them feel valued as a member of a church family or community.
- Get other adults on your team: Kids who have contact and relationship with other adults at church are more likely to maintain their faith into adulthood.

 *Sticky Faith* by Dr. Kara E. Powell and Dr. Chap Clark





## II. Developing broad wings

As we are instilling a sense of self-identity, family identity, and faith identity, like the mama bird, we gradually remove ourselves from tasks and situations our children are ready to handle themselves. And we look for opportunities to give them wings:

1. School
  - When mom goes away, mom always comes back.
  - There are teachers who will help them learn about the world around them.
2. Camps
  - They are capable of taking care of themselves.
3. Youth group and service trips
  - They are capable of offering assistance and comfort to others.
4. Household chores and part-time jobs
  - They can be responsible and reliable, and have valuable contributions to make.
5. Friendships and dating relationships
  - Others will not love them unconditionally like we do, but our children will not break even when someone breaks their heart.

## III. Jesus gave His disciples wings

He sent them out two by two and gave them instructions (see Mark 6 and Luke 10).

*“Two are better than one . . .”*

*— from Ecclesiastes 4:9–12*

1. Two are better than one.
  - Look for friends and mentors for your children.
  - It’s easier to make good choices when surrounded by friends who are making good choices.
2. Trust in God’s provision.
  - Jesus sent out His disciples with no food, no money, and no extra cloak.
  - We can’t control every circumstance nor protect kids against all mishaps.





3. Remind them of their power.
  - Jesus gave His disciples authority over demons and spirits.
  - Your children can pray in the name of Jesus!
4. Circle back.
  - The disciples came back and reported to Jesus all they had done.
  - We need to debrief with our kids.

#### IV. Roots and wings

1. There came the day when it was time for Jesus to step away from His disciples and leave them on their own. But the disciples did not want Jesus to go away!

*“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”*

*—John 16:7*

2. Every bit of effort you pour into your children *now* will allow them to stand on their own two feet, listen to the Spirit, and develop their own conscience.





## Discussion Questions

### Giving Your Kids Roots and Wings

**Report Time:** In our last session we discussed times we feel like a failure as a mom and how we deal with these feelings. Did you make an effort to implement one of the practical steps from that lesson? Please share with your group about how that worked for you—or maybe didn't work for you!

1. After listening to today's lesson about "Roots and Wings," how are you feeling about planting strong roots in your children so they will someday develop broad wings?
2. Think about the three areas of strong roots that were described today: self-identity, family identity, and faith identity. How are you planting these roots in your children today? Are you struggling in any of these areas?
3. Do you have adventurous children who regularly seek opportunities to fly away from the nest to explore, or do you need to be an encouraging mama bird who entices them to step out onto a branch?
4. What fears do you have about releasing your kids from the nest? What can you do to address those fears so your children will develop the broad wings they will need someday?
5. What did you learn from the Biblical story about how Jesus prepared his followers to "leave the nest" in groups of two?
6. What next step can you take this week to plant firm roots in your children? What can you do to encourage your children to take one step away from the nest to strengthen their wings?

**For Next Week:** Reflect on the three areas of "strong roots" we want to plant in our kids—self-identity, family identity, and faith identity. Which of these areas do you most need to build into your children right now? This week, make an effort to impress that on your children.



# Reflections 15

## Giving Your Kids Roots and Wings

### Planting strong roots

Look for ways to help your children develop:

- Their self-identity
- Their family identity
- Their faith identity

### Developing broad wings

Consider Jesus' example with His disciples (Mark 6:6b–13) and Luke 10:1–11). How are you helping your children grow healthy wings?

- Encourage relationships with good friends and mentors.
- Trust God with your children as a model for their trust in Him.
- Remind them of the power of prayer—for themselves and others.
- Cultivate conversation with them about making good choices in life.

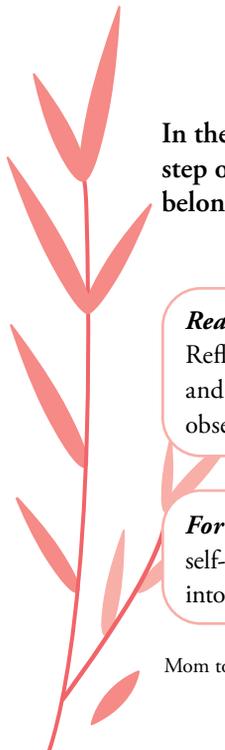
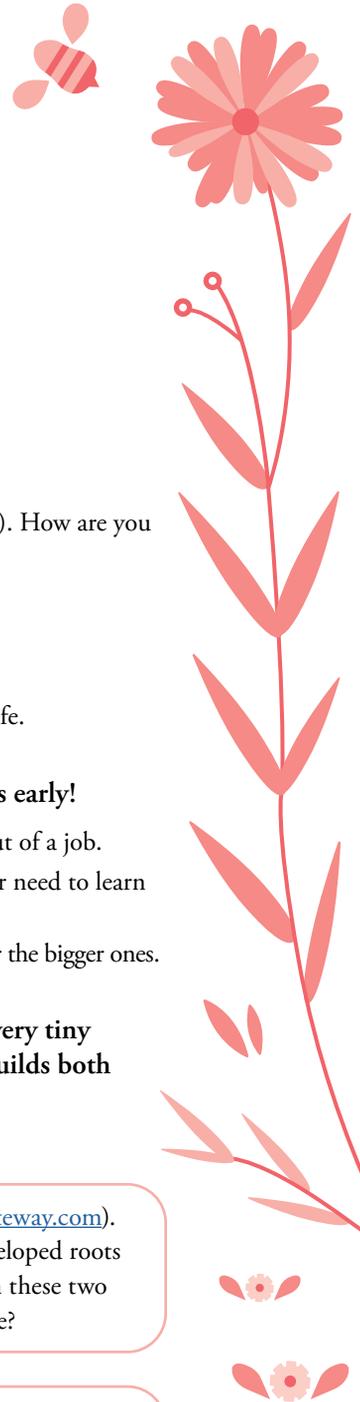
### Remember that giving roots and wings is a life-long process. And it starts early!

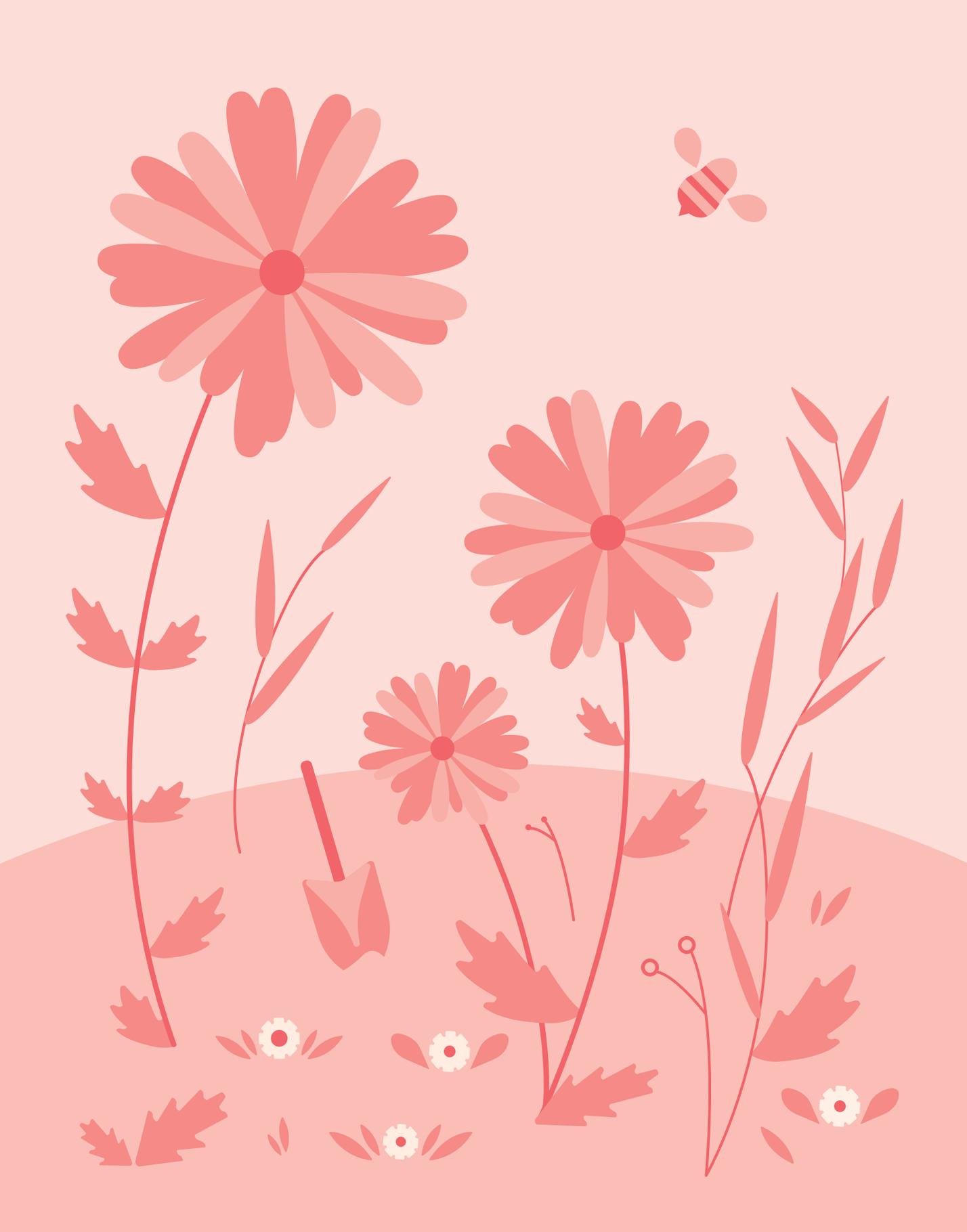
- Being a mom is a push-pull kind of process of working yourself out of a job.
- Being a mom is balancing your kids' need for protection with their need to learn age-appropriate independence.
- Being a mom will involve learning to let go. Small steps prepare us for the bigger ones.

**In the meantime, every story you read to them, every lullaby you sing, every tiny step of independence you encourage (even while holding your breath!) builds both belonging (deep roots) and self-confidence (wide wings).**

**Read and Grow:** Read Luke 2:39–40 in several different versions (see [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com)). Reflect on what it might have been like to be Mary, nurturing Jesus as He developed roots and wings. Then read Luke 2:19. Do you see any possible connections between these two observations? What can we not-mothers-of-Jesus moms learn from her example?

**For Next Week:** Reflect on the three areas of “strong roots” we want to plant in our kids—self-identity, family identity, and faith identity. Which of these areas do you most need to build into your children right now? This week, make an effort to impress that on your children.







# I'm Glad . . . I Wish . . . I Pray . . .

with Linda Anderson

**Today's Focus:** In this final session, Linda reflects on her own “Real Mom Life” and shares things she is glad that she did as a mom, things she wishes she had done, and her prayers for each of you as moms.

## I. I'm glad . . .

1. I don't have *huge* regrets. (Regrets, yes. *Huge*, no.)
2. I got involved in our kids' worlds (home, school, playing fields).
3. I allowed God to heal some of my perfectionism (though I'm still in recovery).
4. I didn't completely miss “what's possible” because I was looking only at “what's impossible.” Especially in the area of devotions.
5. We were able to keep laughing—both at ourselves and at life!
6. Woody and I kept our marriage a priority.
7. We identified what truly matters most—and tried to live that.

## II. I wish . . .

1. I had been less “German.” Sometimes *the list* obscured my vision.
2. I had “gotten it” earlier how little I'm in control and how much God is.
3. I had lightened up and laughed more.
4. I had found a way to do more scripture memorization with our kids.
5. I had read more classic chapter books with our kids.
6. I had remained calmer and implemented “do-overs” in the discipline process.
7. I had “gotten”—and lived—*grace* sooner.





### III. I pray for you . . .

1. To lighten up on yourselves and live as if God is in control (He is).
2. To think clearly about what Truly Matters Most. And live that.
3. To “get” God’s love as the sure foundation of your worth and value.
4. To make—and live by—a “Things I Don’t Do” List. Be okay with that.
5. To remind yourself how forgiving is our God—and our kids!
6. To laugh more. And pray more.
7. To remember prayer as a lifestyle (like breathing).
8. To grow in your own walk with God. Nothing in your life will make you more aware of your need for Him than being a mom.

### IV. Four truths to take with you

1. God supplies all our needs.

*My God shall supply all your need . . .* —Philippians 4:19 (KJV)

2. God has a firm grip on us.

*If [she] stumbles, [she’s] not down for long; God has a grip on [her] hand.*  
—Psalm 37:24 (The Message)

3. God goes with us every step of our mom-life.

“God never calls you to a task without giving you what you need to do it. He never sends you without going with you.”<sup>1</sup>

4. God carries us when we need to be carried.

---

1. Paul David Tripp, *Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family*, p. 33.





## Discussion Questions

### I'm Glad . . . I Wish . . . I Pray . . .

**Report Time:** After last week's lesson on "Roots and Wings," did you reflect on the three areas of "strong roots" we want to plant in our kids—self-identity, family identity, and faith identity? What did you do to build up one of those areas in your children throughout the past week?

1. Complete your own sentence that begins "I'm glad . . ." Share one thing you have done or are currently doing as a mom that would start this list. (You may have many things you'd like to list, but just get the discussion started with one. We encourage you to continue the list at home. You might surprise yourself!)
2. Which things from Linda's "I'm glad" or "I wish" lists most jumped out at you? What things would you like to learn from her retrospective to implement in your home right now—or in the future?





3. Begin your own “Things I Don’t Do” List. Get it started here so you will continue it at home.

Things I Don’t Do:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

4. Which of the things on Linda’s “I pray for you” list seem most needed in your mom-life right now?

5. Where do you find yourself growing in your relationship with God right now? This could be a source (place, group, book, etc.) that helps you to grow *or* an area in which you find yourself growing (e.g., searching, asking questions, finding forgiveness, receiving encouragement, being challenged).

**Scripture Therapy:** Read Isaiah 43:1–7 with *your* name in it every day this week.

**Savor this verse:**

*The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.* —Zephaniah 3:17 (ESV)



## Reflections 16

### I'm Glad . . . I Wish . . . I Pray . . .

#### Which of the items on the “I’m glad” list can you apply to your current mom life?

- Any potential regrets you want to avoid? What “good questions” do you want to ask?
- How can you become more involved in your kids’ worlds? What might help you learn to know them better?
- Any areas of unproductive perfectionism you can guard against?
- How might you be more intentional in creating opportunities for spiritual discussion and growth in your family’s life?
- How’s your sense of humor? Do you need to laugh more?
- If you are currently married, are you making your marriage a priority?
- What really matters most in your parenting? Are you living that out?

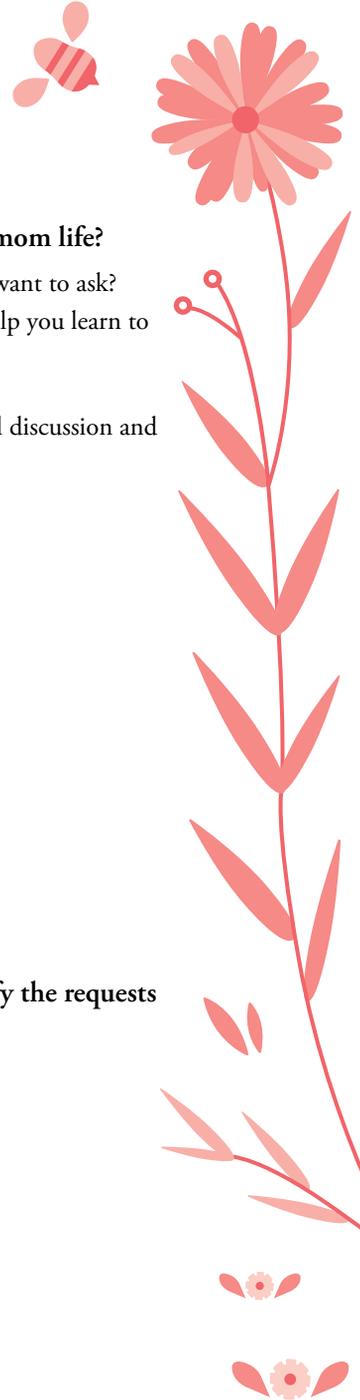
#### How might you avoid some of the “I wish” regrets that were shared?

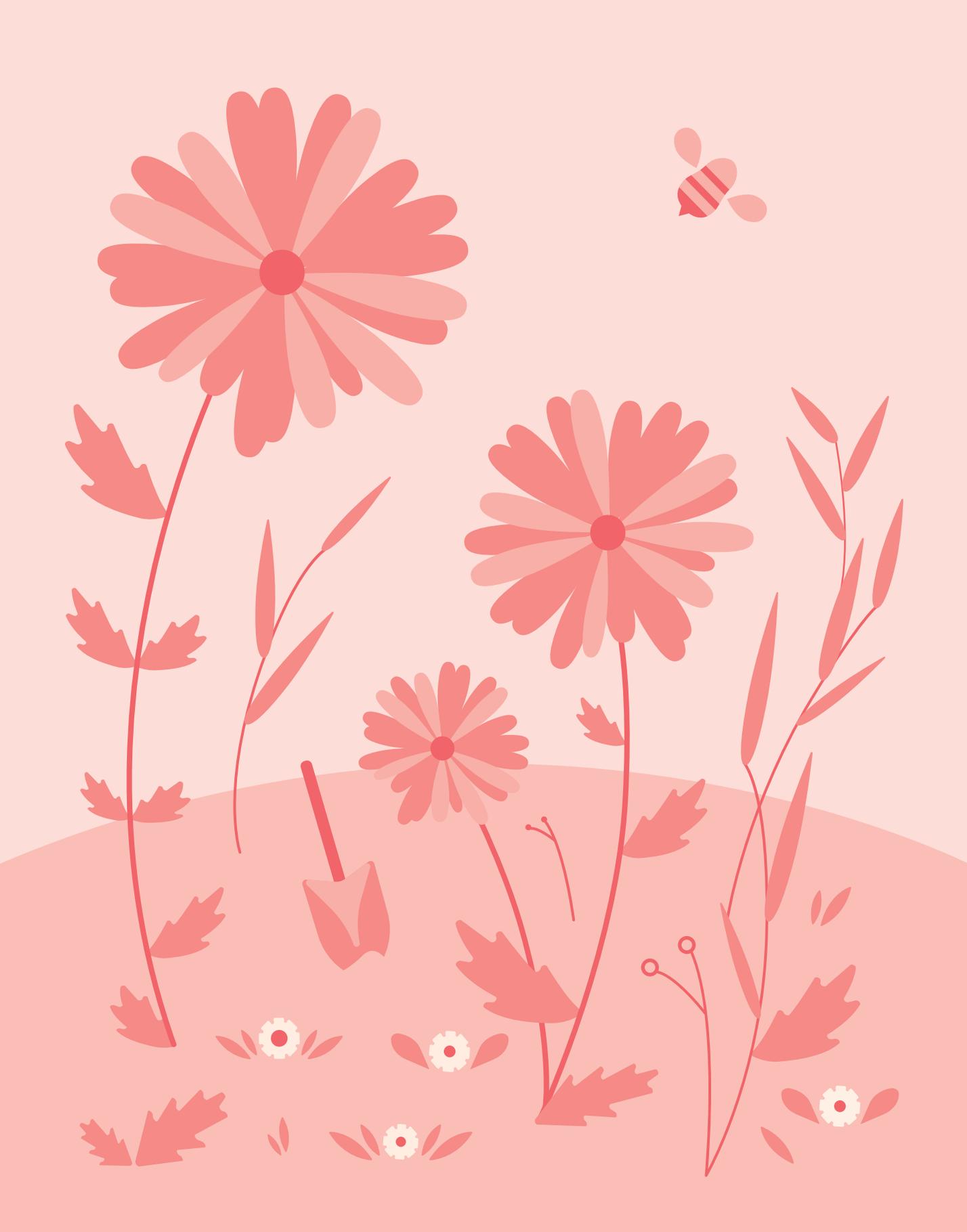
- Is your “list” looming larger than the kids in front of you?
- Do you remind yourself regularly that God is ultimately in charge?
- Where do you need to lighten up and laugh more?
- Are you finding opportunities to memorize Scripture with your kids?
- Can you make some time to read chapter books with your kids?
- Are you asking for grace to remain calmer in disciplining your kids?
- In what areas do you need to give yourself more grace?

#### Look back at the “I pray for you . . .” list of prayers in this lesson. Identify the requests that you want to bring before God in your own prayer life.

#### Take with you these four truths:

- God will supply all you need as a mom.
- God has a firm grip on you—and your kids.
- God goes before you—and with you—every step of your mom life.
- God will carry you when you need to be carried.







*Have you visited the Mom to Mom website?*

[www.momt mom.org](http://www.momt mom.org)

We have many resources there for you: recommended parenting books, encouraging blog posts written by Linda and Theresa, and audio versions of the lessons that you can download and listen to while you walk, when you have some “break time,” or even while you sit in your car in the school pickup line.



Let's face it . . . mom life isn't always pretty!  
Do you need some encouragement for  
your Real Mom Life?



*Real Mom Life* is a biblically-based curriculum that encourages mothers in their every day mom jobs. The series also provides perspective on some more specific parenting situations, such as raising strong-willed children, dealing with infertility, and addressing learning challenges. We recognize that being a mom can be exhausting and sometimes frustrating. In these lessons, we talk about being a mom in the real world!

**This Member Book**—Provides “listening” outlines for each of the sessions, discussion questions for small-group interaction, and Reflections pages. The Reflections pages contain key points and memorable quotes and are intended to be posted in a readily visible location as a daily reminder of that week’s lesson. These pages also offer an optional reading assignment from Scripture and a practical assignment for each week.

## Other Resources Available

**Mom to Mom Administrative Guide**—Offers guidance for establishing a Mom to Mom ministry in your church.

**Mom to Mom Titus 2 Leader Guide**—Defines the role of the Titus 2 Leader and provides extensive training helps.

**Mom to Mom Real Mom Life Leader Pack**—Four DVDs that contain the 16 video teaching sessions of the curriculum series, *Real Mom Life*. Also includes one *Real Mom Life Member Book*, one *Mom to Mom Administrative Guide*, and one *Mom to Mom Titus 2 Leader Guide*.

**Mom to Mom Real Mom Life Video and Audio Files**—Video and audio recordings of each of the 16 sessions are available as individual sessions or as a full curriculum set. Useful for review or when a participant misses a session.

*For these and other resources, please visit [www.momtomom.org](http://www.momtomom.org)*