

Growing Together: Introduction

I wanted to be a perfect mother. I really did. After all, we had waited a long time for these children. I really wanted to be a mom. By the time we had our first child, I had a well-honed resume as a hard-working, task-oriented, driven perfectionist. I had always thrown myself into my teaching career heart and soul; how much more intense I felt about my career as a mom!

During my pregnancy I read books, attended classes, and asked lots of questions. I wanted to do this right! All you moms know the feeling. You also know how long it took me to crash and burn on my road to perfection. I didn't even make it through the first night in the hospital without a meltdown! Sore and exhausted from hours of labor followed by a C-section, I was overwhelmed with feelings of inadequacy when I simply could not soothe or quiet Bjorn or get him back to sleep after a feeding. This job was going to be harder than I'd realized. I was going to have a lot to learn!

And of course every mom knows that was only the beginning. Parenting is a tall task indeed. Despite my many years of caring for other people's children, my career as an educator, and my deep desire to have children, I was quite unprepared for the physical, emotional, and even intellectual demands of this 24/7 "mom job."

I soon discovered there's good news and bad news here. First, the bad news: No, I wasn't going to be a perfect mother, and I had a great deal to learn if I wanted to become a good mother. But here's the good news: As I raised my children, God was going to grow me along with them! We would be growing together. You now see where the title of this *Mom to Mom* curriculum came from: I learned that growing a child is really growing a mom.

I also learned that growing together extended beyond the walls of our home, beyond the boundaries of our family. I needed to be with other moms to grow—peers who were experiencing the same things I was—as well as more experienced moms who could encourage me and cheer me on.

This study grew out of my own experiences growing as a mom and our experiences at *Mom to Mom* growing together. In the weeks ahead, as we explore together Personal Growth, Partnering Growth, and Parenting Growth, it is my prayer that you will feel yourself growing. Above all, I pray that your sense of parenting power will increase as you learn to draw more and more on the resources God offers us as moms. For it is He who gave us these children who will cause us—and them—to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity." (2 Peter 3:18)

Linda

Linda Schultz Anderson

The Parent Trap: Major Myths About Parenting

Welcome! We're glad you're here—either for your first year or to rejoin us at Mom to Mom. Our theme this year will be Growing Together: Growing a Child = Growing a Mom! As we moms grow as women, wives, mothers, and daughters of God, we are energized and empowered to grow healthy children.

Today's Focus: Healthy parenting must be rooted in reality—not mythical images of the perfect parent that mislead and defeat us. Today we'll consider some of the myths about parenting from which we need to move away. Also we will examine five foundational truths that will help us root our parenting in reality.

I. The Starting Point: Hazards of Hyper-parenting

- A. The Perfection Trap: Too good a mother?
- B. “Real Mom” Freedom: It's not all about us.

II. Major Myths About Parenting

Myth #1. Parenting is complicated—you'll need at least a degree in psychology to succeed (or at least you'd better read a lot of books!).

- No one knows your child as well as you do! Reclaim common-sense parenting.

Myth #2. It's actually all very simple—just love your child and all will be well.

- Feeling loved is different from being loved.
- It all depends on your definition of love. (See Hebrews 12:6.)

Myth #3. Parenting is a no-brainer task—anyone can do it.

- Wrong! It takes all the brain cells you have and then some . . .
- Children require more of everything (patience, creativity, resources, food) than adults. My own preschoolers asked me harder questions than my high school students ever did!



Myth #4. It's not the quantity but the quality of time that counts.

- Children do not schedule either their triumphs or their trauma.
- There are no microwave kids!

Myth #5. You're the parent now, so you should know all the answers.

- We all feel like Manoah (Judges 13:8) sometimes—
Where's the Instruction Manual?
- Learning to be a parent is a life-long process.

Myth #6. This feels like forever—even if you do survive, you'll never be the same again ...

- A partial truth: You won't be the same—you'll be
better for the experience!
- Keep in mind the 18-year overview.

Myth #7. You should give up your whole life for your children—if you don't find fulfillment in that, there's something wrong with you.

- A "martyr mother" is unhealthy—and tends to produce
unpleasant kids.
- This is a formative growth period in your life as well as theirs.

III. Five Foundational Truths about Parenting

Truth #1. Parenting is hard work—expect to be tired a lot.

Truth #2. Parenting demands both head and heart—a bit of both Albert Einstein and Mother Teresa.

Truth #3. Parenting is the ultimate test of your perseverance—hang in there!

Truth #4. Parenting is impossible solo—you must call on God's help!

Truth #5. Parenting yields great joy and rewards—it is worth the work!

Remember: "His divine power has given us everything we need." — 2 Peter 1:3, NIV



4. What are some of the other myths about moms (perhaps not mentioned yet this morning) that challenge you or that you have observed in others?

5. In what ways do the Five Foundational Truths About Parenting resonate as true in your life? What encouragement can you take from these?

For Next Week: We will be talking about “Surviving—and Thriving—in the Barnacle Stage and Beyond.” Think about one or two survival tips for moms you might share with your group. Also find a few minutes to listen to Devotion 1 on the CD in the back of your member book.

Reflections 1

The Parent Trap

Move Away from these myths (partial truths):

- Parenting is hopelessly complicated.
- Parenting is super-simple; love is all it takes.
- Parenting is a no-brainer task.
- It's not the quantity but the quality time that counts.
- As a parent, you should know all the answers.
- This stage is forever, and you'll never be the same again.
- You should give up your whole life for your kids.

Reflect on these foundational truths:

- Parenting is hard work—don't be surprised you're tired.
- Parenting demands both head and heart.
- Parenting is the ultimate test of your perseverance.
- Parenting is impossible solo—call on God's help!
- Parenting yields great joy and rewards!

Your children are not looking for the perfect mom. They are looking for a mom who will love them, listen to them, and grow along with them.

There are no microwave kids!

You were not meant to parent alone. Consult the Manufacturer's instructions (through the Bible and prayer) regularly!

Read and Grow: Read Hebrews 12:1-3 and reflect on these questions: Who are the witnesses and why are they important? What might hinder us? What character quality is required for running the race? What should we be focusing on as we run? What will be the result?

For Next Week: We will be talking about “Surviving—and Thriving—in the Barnacle Stage and Beyond.” Think about a survival tip to share with the other moms in your group. Listen to Devotion 1 on the CD in the back of this book.

Note: The “Reflections” pages may also be found on the CD.

