

Nurtured

God's Tender Care for
Expectant and New Mothers



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MEETING 1:

A Mother as a Daughter

Before This Meeting:

Find a photo (paper or digital) of you with your child(ren) that you think shows your affection for them to take to the meeting. Be ready to share it with the group to help imagine lavish love.

Introduction

I've recently spent many a sunny afternoon pushing my small daughter around our neighborhood in circles, hoping that her busy, growing mind will agree with her tired body that it's time for a nap. I often look longingly at her cushioned stroller seat, surrounded by cozy blankets, shielded by a sun visor, as I sing a hopeful lullaby from nearby. If only *I* could curl up in such a nice spot, I'd be all too glad to accept a nap! Being an expectant or new mother can be so sweet and yet so very tiring. A friend and I recently described motherhood as a full body-and-soul workout!

I hope that you will find a place in this Bible study to “curl up” like my little girl does in her cozy stroller and accept some

moments of rest and encouragement from our loving and nurturing God. A wise friend once told me, “We can’t give what we don’t have.” I need that reminder and that permission. Stopping to be nurtured by God is worthwhile, for ourselves and those we care for.

On the pages of this study, you’ll find an image of a big hand and little hand. I chose this image to remind us of something comforting and true: As we love and care for our little ones, cradling their tiny hands in ours, God Himself is caring for us. And His care is constant, strong, and perfect. The best of human nurture is just a shadow compared to God’s love. In Scripture, God often compares or contrasts Himself with human parents. God intended parents to reflect what He offers His children—belonging, acceptance, training, security, and provision. Parents are designed to mirror God’s care, love, attentiveness, constancy, patience, guidance, and faithfulness.

Let’s explore some verses together where God uses the image of parenting to show us more of His loving and good heart toward His children. Please read aloud these words of Jesus:

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!” (Matthew 7:7-11).

The best earthly parent is far from perfect. As parents, we still fall into the unfortunate category of “you who are evil” (v. 11). We are fallen, broken sinners. I run out of patience when my daughter

does gymnastics on the changing table. I feel jealousy or frustration with my snoring husband when I'm up in the middle of the night consoling and feeding our teething baby. We are all far from perfect as parents or people. And yet, we know how to give good things to our children. We delight in seeing them enjoy the world. My husband picked up an extra container of strawberries at the grocery store this week because he knows my daughter loves to gnaw on them. And I devise silly games and songs just to make her laugh. How much more does God, who is perfect and unlimited, delight to give us good things?!

In Pairs – Partner Practice 1:

(Fill out individually and share in pairs.)

- How would you fill in these blanks based on Matthew 7:7-11? (Many different descriptions are possible—what strikes you from the passage?)

A good parent is not _____ or _____.
Instead, a good parent is _____ and _____.

- What does this passage show us about God, our Father?

God our good Father is not _____ or _____.
Instead, He is perfectly _____ and _____.

God's heart is kind and generous toward us. This is such good news for me as a new mom! I feel my limitations acutely when long nights and lack of sleep catch up with me. My time and resources are stretched so thin sometimes. I can be hard on myself, pushing myself to do more or feeling guilty that my emotions are

so mixed. But God does not have these limitations. Not only that, He is unfailingly gracious. He delights to give us what is good. And He knows best what good is!

Share with the Group:

- Share something you delight to do for or with your child to make them happy. Our loving God delights to tenderly care for us, His children. The apostle John was one of Jesus's dearest friends and disciples during Christ's earthly ministry. He saw Jesus's life and love with his own eyes. And in the verse we'll read below, he describes God's love as "lavish." I hope this study will give us many opportunities to read about and experience this tender care in our own hearts and lives as we care for our little ones.

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (1 John 3:1a NIV).

Creative Activity – Picture It!

Share with the Group:

- Share the photo of you with your child(ren) that shows your affection for them. As you share it with the group, imagine lavish love.

In Pairs – Partner Practice 2:

(Discuss in groups of two or three.)

- Share how you would describe God from Matthew 7 and 1 John 3.

- How is this similar to how you usually think of Him?
- What are some ways this is different than how you often think of Him or different than how things feel some days?

Wrap Up

My prayer for all of us is that we will believe and feel more deeply God's delight, generosity, and tender care, even when circumstances make that harder to hold on to. Even when we can't hold on—maybe especially then—He's holding on to us.

Group Prayer:

- Take a moment before parting ways to pray that each of us would experience God's love and tender care more deeply.

Take home Meeting 1 reflection cards with the following verses and reflection to ponder this week.

Verses:

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.
– Galatians 3:26, NIV

The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty One who will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will quiet you by His love; He will exult over you with loud singing.
– Zephaniah 3:17

Reflection:

This week, as you notice yourself smiling at your child or feel your heart delighting in them, take a moment to think of God's heart

*for you. Remind yourself of Zephaniah 3:17. God says He rejoices over His people. He delights in us. Let that truth sink a little deeper. **You are loved.***