

# What Race is Your Family Running?

## Journal:

1. What stage of parenting are you in right now? What does it feel like you are focusing on or doing most of the time. Here's a fun way to think about that...

If I had to give my race a name right now it would be \_\_\_\_\_.

2. What am I working on with each of my children? (routines, behaviour, character, education...) List 1-2 things for each child.

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3. What does an average week look like on my calendar? What does your family schedule look like? List some of the main things you and your family do.

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**Hebrews 12:1** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*

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## A. Why is it important to “begin with the end in mind?”

**Matthew 22:36-40** (NLT) **36** “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” **37** Jesus replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ **38** This is the first and greatest commandment. **39** A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ **40** The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

- The end goal is to love God and love others.

## B. What does it look like to “begin with the end in mind?”

- If you want to begin with the end in mind you have to keep your eyes on the finish line. You have to focus on where you want to go in order to actually get there.
- We want everyone in our family to love God and to love others. How do we accomplish that goal?

## **Spend time with Jesus every day.**

- We need to get alone with Him and remember how big He is and how much He loves us and how He is the one that gives us strength for each and every second. And when we spend time with Him we are reminded of the big picture, the finish line, eternity. And that helps not get so bogged down in the day to day.

## **Get Jesus' perspective on the little things**

**-Let him show you what matters and what doesn't.**

**-Let Jesus remind you that little things add up to big things.**

Sometimes we get tired and let things slide or we don't think about the long term implications of what we are doing or allowing.

**-Let Jesus show you that sometimes what looks really bad will actually turn out for good.**

**Romans 8:28** *"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them."*



## Reflection

“Begin with the end in mind”. As Christians we have chosen to run a special race. We are called to love God and love others. That is to be our goal and the focus for how we raise our kids.

Is that the race you are running? Is that what you are running after? Or have you gotten side-tracked by being successful or looking good or your own selfish desires or just surviving? Maybe you're not side-tracked but you've sat down on the sidelines. You got tired, you forgot there is a finish line when you will stand before Jesus to account for the race you ran. Or sin has sidelined you and made you lose sight of the end. Maybe you got injured during your race. You got hurt by others or you feel hurt by God. Maybe you don't even want to run this race anymore.

**Where are you at?** Write down a few words that you feel describe how you are doing right now in your “race” as a mom.

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**Ask Jesus what He wants to say to you about how you are doing.**

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**Do you need to change anything?**

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## **Application**

We want to take some time right now to ask Jesus for his perspective on something in our lives.

-maybe He wants to show you what matters and what doesn't.

-maybe He wants to show you a little thing that could turn into a big thing if you leave it unchecked. Something you think doesn't really matter but when you look down the road at what happens, it could be harmful for your child or marriage.

-maybe he wants to talk to you about something that you think looks bad but in His eyes it's part of a finished masterpiece.

**Jesus what do I need your perspective on today?**

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**Jesus how do you see this problem or situation?**

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**Is there anything I need to stop doing or do differently?**

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## Take home

1. Talk to your husband about what you learnt today.
2. Write down 5 “end in mind” ideas and think about what it will take to get there.

-I want my kids to be hard workers. (then I need to teach them to work and not just do it myself because that is easier)

-I want my kids to be polite and respectful to others. (I need to be very careful of the tone I use with them. I need to teach them what it looks like to be polite and respectful (look people in the eyes when talking to them, respond back to their questions, don't interrupt) When they aren't polite or respectful I need to have strategies for teaching/disciplining them.

-I want my kids to sit nicely at the table and try new foods politely so we can have people over and go to other people's homes and fellowship with them and not turn them off with our bad table manners. (I need to try new food at home on them, I need to explain what I expect at the table, we need to practice good table manners at home before people come over, I need to have plans for what to do when they say “yuck” or burp and use potty talk at the table)

## When His Voice Cuts Through The Noise

Better Mom blog March 9,2016

She was turning eight on the first birthday that she celebrated with us. I think this was her first birthday ever, as the first years of her life had been undocumented. And I was overwhelmed – a likely coupling.

We'd just completed our most recent adoption of two more children and my head was still spinning. Life hadn't stopped to let me more deeply absorb the impact of melding lives and histories and cultures all under one roof. I still had to cook dinner every night. We all needed clean underwear.

In the times of transition like this, I was most aware of how limitless life can feel. We'd just adopted internationally and outside the birth order. I could find hundreds of blogs and dozens of articles to inform this transition. I was cooking for six now, not just four. And there were countless sites I could search for recipes and women offering advice on the screen about how to feed a large family. I was homeschooling – certainly no dearth of resources there to tell me what to teach and how to teach it. And in an effort to keep myself sane, I was still running several mornings a week. According to the sites, barefoot running was the new trend for the well-studied runner.

Never mind all that, it was her birthday (and this was before pinterest) so just a few clicks to give ideas and we'd be throwing the bash of a lifetime. But this was not our year for big birthday parties. Big events and celebrations can often serve to send the child spiraling who is still adapting to life in a family. This year would be small, an intimate circling around her.

Days before her birthday – my plan for the day already in place – I prayed for her and her siblings, line by line through Isaiah 61. *Heal their broken hearts, open prison doors that bind them, comfort them as they mourn.* My mind stayed on her, the one with the most years outside of our family.

*Replace her ashes with beauty,* I prayed, feeling a little bereft against all these lofty words. I knew what our everyday looked like. And then this phrase dropped into my spirit: *Beauty is a birthday party.*

Immediately, I knew in the there's-no-way-I-could-pull-this-off-right-now-unless-I-was-sure-it-was-God kind of way that my plans were being shifted. So we planned a surprise birthday for her, this child who had only months earlier learned what a surprise was.

This was an interesting proposition on behalf of a child who was still shedding her shy skin and whose closest acquaintances were only those few adults who had frequented our post-adoption incubation period. My children were still learning to make friends out of siblings – we weren't yet focused on making "family" out of friends, as was done throughout their orphanage life.

Our guests came bearing gifts of words on quilt squares, pieces that made up one resounding message. They sang the age-old song that her ears heard for herself the first time, ever. And, she received. A layer



of the hardness of years of being orphaned was rinsed away in song and cake and surprise squeals. That night, she turned a substantive corner. All after a birthday party I had feebly cobbled together in just a few days. And all because of a whisper from God.

Mamas, all that is available to us – the countless resources and images and stories we hear in a day that can inform the way that we live-- are a profound gift. I have more ideas today about how to approach my life and home than I did last week, thanks to the help of authors and snapshots into friends' lives whom I admire. But.

But. These will never replace the power and beauty of the whisper of God into our finite life.

And sometimes we just need to shut it all out a bit, so we can hear the Best Voice informing how we raise up those young ones.

We so often respond to that tired cry of ours -- "I just can't do it all" – with less sleep and more drive and amping up that internal conversation where we coach ourselves into more output. We respond by ... doing more. When "I just can't do it all" pretty much sums up our humanity.

My best parenting moments come when I'm weak and feeling incapable and He shows up, strong and more-than able. Sure, I get great ideas from Instagram, but on many days it's the quiet nudge in the laundry room that I get from Him (the one that doesn't require me to pour myself in to something I could never carry through while I grumble at the little people getting in my way) that creates the most beauty in my home.

God is a really good leader.

## **How To Find Rest Through Focus**

Okay, momma, tell me how are you really doing today? Are you overwhelmed? Overworked? Feeling overlooked?

**Balancing the responsibilities of motherhood is like carrying out the tasks most CEOs delegate to hundreds of employees.**

Compounding the pressure we feel is this pure longing to *perfectly* manage our households and nurture our families well for the glory of God. It's a good mission! Right? And yet the pursuit of it can make us crazy busy instead of enjoying the journey of motherhood — a journey that should include soul-filling and body-refueling rest.

**Have you noticed how it's hard to embrace rest when all we can see is what's left undone?**

Like that load of laundry that went through the washer twice last week because I kept forgetting to move it over. Or the living room hardwoods desperately in need of a mopping, thanks to the dog's drool. How about the table next to my chair piled up with medical bills awaiting payment, along with a note to write to my Compassion child, and an RSVP for my son's classmate's birthday party.

**The "not yet done" becomes the tyranny of the urgent that robs us of rest.** We never seem to notice what we've accomplished in our "never enough" mindset. Is that because our self-worth and sense of value is wrapped up in our accomplishments? I wonder, is this the enemy's tactic to not only steal our joy but also derail us from focusing on what matters most — serving God with our whole heart, no matter what our responsibilities shape up to be on any given day and doing so without feeling like we have to burn the midnight oil.

**So how do we do find the balance between stewardship of the relationships and responsibilities He's given us while learning how to hit pause for rest?** Well, I think it starts with mindset, as we adjust our expectation and move our FOCUS in a new direction. That shift is subtly, but intentional and comes through honest reflection with the Lord. So how about pausing now to talk with the Lord about His expectations for you?

#### **Take a FOCUS Check-In with the Lord**

##### **F Family**

Lord, am I serving my family through meeting their emotional, physical, and spiritual needs for your glory (Colossians 3:22)? How would You like me to go about this differently? What am I doing well? What needs training? Discipline? Support? Lord, please show me Your priorities for my family.

##### **O Overflow**

Lord, am I taking care of my body, mind, and soul in such a way that I'm filled up by You so that I can overflow onto others what you've already poured into me (Romans 15:13)? Lord, do I need to make time to sleep longer and better? Do I need to focus on a health plan that works for me (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)? Do I need to get deeper into your Word on a daily basis?

### C Connecting

Lord, am I taking time to connect and cultivate life-giving relationships with my sisters-in-Christ? Am I moving out of my comfort zone to connect with the body of Christ in a way that allows them to serve me and also in a way that I can serve them (1 Corinthians 12)? Am I reaching beyond to share the Gospel with those you've put in my life?

### U Unfolding

Lord, am I living in your unfolding grace (2 Corinthians 4:16-18 MSG), letting go of all the expectations I put upon myself and perceive that others put upon me as I allow your power be made perfect in my weakness?

### S Sabbath

Lord, will you show me how to take a Sabbath rest and trust you will all my needs (Hebrews 4:9)? Show me when I should pause, wait, and lean into your provisions. Show me how to hold back from all my doing and rest in just being yours.

God's knows the myriad of responsibilities on our plates. He knows the intricacies of all the relationships that fill our lives. He doesn't expect to function without rest — but finding that rest takes FOCUS as we approach our relationships and responsibilities from a place of being filled up by Him first so that we can join Him in His work (Ephesians 2:10 MSG).